

# Shabbat Shalom from Torah MiTzion

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## Parshat Miketz

By Carmi Ronen, former shaliach, Dayton

### “Is My Father Still Alive”

A well-written thriller uses uncertainty and the unexpected in order to hold and keep our attention. Similarly, throughout Parshat Mikeitz, the Torah manages to keep us in suspense with the riveting story of Yosef's rise to power and his encounter with his estranged brothers. Yet, we also find ourselves feeling somewhat uncomfortable as we learn about Yosef *HaTzaddik's* (literally, the righteous one) apparent vindictiveness towards his brothers.

Many commentators attempt to understand the essence of the friction and the conflict between Yosef and his brothers. On one side, we have the brothers, who throw Yosef into the pit and almost kill him. Opposing them, we have Yosef, who seemingly abuses his brothers and does not bother to inform his distraught father that his beloved son is, in fact, alive.

With so many convincing approaches to the story, we may find it difficult to adhere to one viewpoint. I will provide a brief synopsis of some opinions and explanations – I am confident that there are many others – which address the question of why Yosef waits to reveal his true identity to his brothers.

According to the **Ramban**, Yosef wishes to see his dreams come true. (See Nechama Leibowitz's extensive treatment of the Ramban's approach.)

Both the **Ba'al HaAkeidah** and the **Abarbanel** opine that Yosef wants his brothers to do *teshuva*. Thus, the entire episode is really an elaborate strategy to recreate the circumstances of their initial sin – in the hope that this time they will refrain from sinning.

## Shalom Yedidim

Just recently I returned from visiting various Torah Mitzion communities in South and North America. This time I want to share with you my impression on Montevideo, Uruguay.

Montevideo has always been a vibrant Zionist Community. Throughout the years Torah Mitzion has been active in strengthening the Religious Zionist component while being involved in schools, youth movements, Hillel and more. Today, Rav Tzvi Elon, serves not only as a Rosh Kollel but also as a Rabbi of the Yavne Shul. Yavne has become the largest and most vibrant community in Montevideo.

Frum and non-frum people feel comfortable davening there, and most importantly, many of them find their path to Judaism through the warmth and welcoming of this community. Adults, young adults and teenagers feel at home.



One of highlights of the week is a lively Fri-

**Rav Yoel Bin Nun** maintains that Yosef thinks that his father Yaakov was in on the brother's plot. However, when Yehudah reports that their father had been deceived by the brothers, Yosef realizes his mistake and reveals himself to his brothers.

**David Henschke** believes that Yosef himself acts inappropriately. Even in his youth, he curls his hair. Furthermore, he distances himself from his brothers; he does not break down and reveal his true identity until the very end. Also, Yosef wants his only brother Binyamin to come to Egypt and, therefore, plants the goblet in the sack, etc.

These ideas and solutions are assorted approaches to the convoluted plotline. But, in my humble opinion, the key to the story can be found at the climax - the beginning of Parshat VaYigash when Yosef finally reveals himself:

“And Yosef could not endure with all those standing before him, and he called out, ‘Remove everyone from before me,’ and no one stood with him when Yosef made himself known to his brothers. And he gave his voice in weeping; and Egypt heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Yosef said to his brothers, **‘I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?’ but his brothers could not answer him because they were alarmed by his presence.**” (Breishit 45:1-3)

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### Shabbat Times

	Local	Jerusalem
In		15:59
Out		17:14

**Please daven for the  
 3 abducted  
 Israeli soldiers:**

**Gilad Shalit (Gilad  
 ben Aviva), Ehud  
 Goldwasser (Ehud  
 ben Malka) & Eldad  
 Regev (Eldad ben  
 Tovah)**

**And for the safety of  
 all Am Yisrael.**

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## A Message from Rav Boaz Genut, our Executive Director

day night davening. The singing, uplifting spirit and sense of coming together play an important roll in making this prayer so exciting.

A couple of months ago a decision was taken to establish the Yeshiva of Montevideo where local *Balebatim* and college students can grow and learn Torah in depth with the Yeshiva staff including our bachurim: Zeev Levi, Yonatan Yosim and Elkana Shtul.

Montevideo is a shaliach empire where all organizations come together: Torah Mitzion, the Jewish Agency, Sherut Leumi, Bnei Akiva, Pincus Fund, Ner La'elef and Amiel and with no doubts, it is the community which benefits from this cooperation.

Yeshar Coach  
 Rav Boaz Genut



By Rav Eli Skuri, former Rosh Kollel, Kansas City

## What Can We Learn From *Shmitah*?

With the advent of the *shmitah* year here in *Eretz Yisrael*, we were confronted with a whole slew of halachic questions. Although most of these are practical issues, *shmitah* also introduces a number of universal halachic principles.

One of these basic questions is dependent on a major *machloket* concerning *shmitah's* scope – between three of the leading Torah giants of 16<sup>th</sup> century Tzefat. On one side of the argument was Rav Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Beit Yosef*. His ruling was disputed by the *Mabit* (Rav Moshe MiTrani) and his son, the *Maharit* (Rav Yosef MiTrani).

The question was whether a non-Jew's ownership of land in *Eretz Yisrael* overrides *kedushat shvi'it* (literally, the sanctity of the seventh – i.e. the sanctity associated with *shmitah* produce). In other words, if a non-Jew grows fruit in *Eretz Yisrael* during a *shmitah* year, is the fruit included in the *mitzvah* of *shmitah*? If so, the fruit has *kedushat shvi'it* like a Jewish farmer's fruit. Alternatively, does the fact that the plot in question is owned by a non-Jew somehow "prevent" *shmitah* from applying to the plot and its produce? If the latter is the case, the produce does not have *kedushat shvi'it*, but *trumot u'ma'asrot* (tithes) must be separated – as in a regular year (assuming that a Jew finished the process).

The **Shulchan Aruch** (24), who based his opinion on the **Rambam**, ruled that the second approach is valid. In other words, if a non-Jew owns land in *Eretz Yisrael*, *kedushat shvi'it* does not apply; the produce is not *hefker* (loosely, ownerless); and, if relevant, *trumot u'ma'asrot* must be separated.

In contrast, the **Mabit** held that even *payrot nochri* (the produce of a non-Jew) have *kedushat shvi'it*, and *trumot u'ma'asrot* do not apply. In fact, during *Shmitah* 3034 (1573), he initially acted in accordance with this ruling. However, the *chachamim* of Tzefat arose and declared that everyone was obligated to follow the *Beit Yosef* in this

regard.


Actually, the *machloket* between the *Beit Yosef* and the *Mabit* was based on an earlier and more fundamental *machloket*, which has implications for the entire Torah. This prior *machloket* is summed up by the **Minchat Chinuch** on *Sefer HaChinuch* (80):

"And I am doubtful whether or not the *mitzvah* of *shmitah* is *akrakapta digavra* (literally, on the man's head) – that *Rachmana* commanded him *lihafkir* (to repudiate ownership of) his fruit during *shvi'it*, and he is obligated to carry this out and *lihafkir*. And if he repudiated ownership, it is *hefker*, but if he did not repudiate ownership, it is not *mufkar*. And it is clear that the owner transgresses a positive *mitzvah*. In any event, his field is not *hefker*, even though he transgressed Hashem's decree. And if so, another person is not allowed to pick from the field, and if he did pick, it is *gezel* (stealing).

"Or, this *hefker* of the land during *shmitah* – the owner does not have to repudiate ownership. Rather, it is *afkaata diMalka* (roughly, expropriation of the King); it is *hefker* no matter what. And anyone can pick, and if the owner locks his vineyard, he is stealing from the public."

Thus, there are two possible ways of understanding the concept of *hefker* during the *shmitah* year:

*Hefker is afkaata diMalka*. In other words, all the fields in *Eretz Yisrael* are automatically expropriated by Heaven during the *shmitah* year. A person's private ownership of his produce is instantaneously cancelled, and anyone can come pick the produce, regardless of the owner's wishes. Of course, the owner can physically prevent others from gaining access to the produce by locking his field. However,

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## Is My Father Still Alive/ *Continued from page 1*

Throughout the entire affair, Yosef has been gearing up for the events of the last sentence above. The commentators wonder what Yosef is asking. Does he not know that his father is still alive? After all, even during the initial meeting, the brothers say that their father is still alive, and they keep repeating this fact. In fact, the main point of Yehudah's speech is that Yaakov may die if Binyamin is brought down to Egypt, because:

"His soul is bound up with his soul." (Breishit 44:30)

The **Seforno** explains:

"Is my father still alive – How can it be that he did not die because of his anxiety for me?"

In his speech, Yehudah stresses that the brothers now identify with their younger brother. Moreover, he shows that the brothers recognize that Yaakov and Binyamin cannot be separated – "his soul is bound up with his soul." Thus, immediately following the speech, Yosef turns to his brothers and says, "I am Yosef," the one who you separated from my father twenty-two years ago. He then adds, "Is my father still alive?" – can he still be living after all these years?

"But his brothers could not answer him because they were **alarmed mipanav**" (literally, "by his face" – loosely, "by his presence"). Why does the Torah use the word "*mipanav*"? According to **Rashi**, the

brothers are alarmed, because they are ashamed. They are literally startled by Yosef's face, which resembles Yaakov's face. (Yosef is called Yaakov's "*ben zekunin*." According to one interpretation, this refers to the fact that Yosef's *ziv akunin* – his face – is similar to Yaakov's.) In other words, the brothers suddenly see their father's face before them, and they finally understand how much pain they have caused Yaakov over the years. In essence, they wince from shame, because it is as if Yaakov's own image is hovering before them.

This approach follows the *Ba'al HaAkeidah* and the *Abarbanel*, who say that Yosef wants his brothers to do *teshuvah*. Yet, the brothers must not only atone for selling Yosef; they also need to do *teshuvah* for wronging their father Yaakov during twenty-two long years. Yosef stage-manages his encounter with his brothers in order to ensure that they are able to internalize how much their father suffered on their account.

Only when the brothers finally comprehend the magnitude of their sins – both with respect to Yosef and with respect to Yaakov – is Yosef able to send his father the welcome tidings that he is, in fact, alive.



## The Land Of My Affliction

By Rav Moshe Lichtman

In two weeks we will read the blessing that Ya'akov Avinu gave his grandsons, Efrayim and Menasheh: *By you Israel shall bless, saying, "May God make you like Efrayim and Menasheh"* (48:20). Many commentators ask why we bless our children that they should be like Efrayim and Menasheh? With all due respect, wouldn't it make more sense to wish that they turn out like Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov? The standard answer is that Ya'akov foresaw that his descendants would spend a lot of time in exile, in an atmosphere foreign to Jewish values. He, therefore, wanted to give them a blessing that would help preserve their uniqueness and prevent them from assimilating among the nations. Efrayim and Menasheh were the first Jews born and raised on foreign soil, yet they managed to safeguard their traditions and retain their sanctity. Therefore, they are the most fitting role models for us to emulate.

The only question is how *did* they manage to stay Jewish in such a decadent place like Egypt? The answer, I believe, is found in this week's *parashah*. The Torah states, *Yosef called the name of the firstborn Menasheh, for [he said], "God has made me forget ( ושיני all my toil and all [the hardships of] my father's house." And the name of the second he called Efrayim, for [he said], "God has made me fruitful ( והפריני in the land of my affliction"* (41:51-52). These last five words seem to be incongruous. Yosef had reached the heights of fame and fortune in Egypt. How could he call such a land, *the land of my affliction*? Granted, he had a rough start, but now he was the second most influential man in the country!

The Abarbanel, R. Zalman Sorotzkin (*Oznayim LaTorah*), and others answer that despite all the fame and fortune, Yosef never lost sight of the fact that this was not where he belonged. He constantly yearned to return to his father's home in *Eretz Yisrael*, even though he knew that his financial and social status would suffer greatly (after all, he would be returning to his brothers' jealous wrath). Even though God had made him fruitful in Egypt, he still saw it as a land of affliction.

This, in my opinion, is how Efrayim and Menasheh were able to

withstand the temptations of *galut*. We can assume (and there are sources to confirm this) that Yosef instilled this feeling of "being a stranger in a strange land" into his sons' psyches. He made sure that they, too, understood that this was not where they belonged, but in a much holier place not too far away. With this type of upbringing, it is not surprising that they turned out the way they did.

How many Jews presently living in America, England, Canada, Australia, etc., see their dwelling-places as lands of affliction? Unfortunately, not enough. If they truly did, they would return Home at the first possible opportunity, just as Yosef would have done. And today's Jews are not viceroys to the king! Oh yeah, one almost was. When that Yosef (Sen. Joseph Lieberman) was asked about the problem of dual loyalties, he allegedly said, "There is no problem; I am an American first." With such an attitude, is it surprising that so many Jews choose – and I emphasize the word "choose" – to dwell on foreign soil? The original Yosef would never have said, or even thought, such a thing. His response would have been more like this: "There is no problem; I have only one loyalty: to my true Homeland, the Land of my forefathers. I am here only because God has sent me to support my father and brothers. The moment my mission is complete, I will return to where I belong, God willing."

One last point: Why did Yosef call Egypt *the land of my affliction*? That was simply no longer true. There must have been some other way of expressing his longing for *Eretz Yisrael*. The message, I believe, is similar to last week's. No matter how good things seem to be in the Diaspora, a Jew must understand that "he is closer to death than life" (*Parashat VaYeishev*, "Apparent Safety"). Or, as I always tell my students, there are four, very important words that one must constantly remember when reflecting upon today's situation in the Diaspora: **Galut is a punishment!** No matter how nice it feels, it is still a punishment.

From Rav Lichman's "*Eretz Yisrael In The Parashah*", published by Devora Publishing

## Shmitah / Continued from page 2

in doing so, he is thereby stealing from them.

The Torah commanded the owner to repudiate ownership. In order to observe the positive *mitzvah* of *shmitah*, he must actively repudiate ownership of his fields and produce during the seventh year. But if he chooses to disregard this *mitzvah* and avoids repudiating ownership, the fields and the produce are not *hefker*. Thus, he himself rejects a positive *mitzvah*, and one who picks the produce without his express permission has committed *gezel*.

According to the Minchat Chinuch, the first view reflects the opinion of the Mabit and the Maharit. Since *shmitah* is divinely and automatically applied to the land – regardless of the owner's wishes – *kedushat shvi'it* pertains to all the fields in *Eretz Yisrael* – even those that are owned by a non-Jew. However, the Beit Yosef accepted the second view and believed that *shmitah* is not automatic. Instead,

*shmitah* is the responsibility of the Jewish landowner. Therefore, *shmitah* does not apply in the case of a non-Jewish landowner, and *trumot u'ma'asrot* must be separated from the produce of a non-Jew.

We are thus confronted with a fundamental *machloket*: Are the Torah's *mitzvot* applied divinely and automatically? Or, were the *mitzvot* presented to man, and therefore, they only come into effect when man chooses to accept them? When it comes to *shmitah*, most authorities concur with the Beit Yosef that the *mitzvah* belongs to man (i.e. the field's owner). Hence, we can infer from *shmitah* that the goal of every *mitzvah* is to educate and uplift man.

"The *mitzvot* were only given in order to attach mankind to them." (Breishit Raba 44:1)

## The Bilu Movement and the Establishment of Gadera

Yaniv Akiva, former Shaliach, Montreal

In March 1881, Alexander II, the Russian tsar, was assassinated by radical revolutionaries. As a result of the murder, his son came to power, and Polish and Ukrainian Jewry suffered the deadly pogroms known as the "Storms in the Negev" (1881-1883).

Founded in the city of Kharkov in 1882, the Bilu movement – Bilu stood for "*Beit Yaakov, Lechu V'Nelchah*" ("House of Yaakov, come and let us go") (Yeshaya 2:5) – was established by a group of young *maskilim* (literally, intellectuals; refers to adherents of the *Haskalah*, or Enlightenment). Realizing that talking alone would not change anything, they were determined to become *aliyah* pioneers and to spearhead the settlement initiative. At first, the movement numbered approximately fifty members, including several women.

The *Bilu'im* supported the idea of an agricultural and democratic Jewish center in *Eretz Yisrael* – despite the inherent difficulties. In 1882, they issued their first manifest in Russia and asserted that the survival of the Jewish people is dependent on the formation of a national territory. Moreover, the *Bilu'im* insisted, that territory can only be located in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Emissaries were sent from Kharkov to various Russian cities in order to establish new Bilu branches. Thus, the movement's membership swelled to around 500 members. Initially, the *Bilu'im* hoped to raise enough money from donations and membership dues to enable some 3,000 individuals to make *aliyah* to *Eretz Yisrael*. However, poverty and insufficient new recruits meant that only 200 rubles were raised.

On July 6, 1882, the first fourteen *Bilu'im* arrived in Yaffo with a grand total of 553 rubles in their collective pockets. They started to work in agriculture at the Mikve Yisrael School, but their wages proved inadequate for basic survival. Therefore, some of the members elected to move to Alexandria, Egypt, where they would work and send money to their friends in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Eventually, some of the *Bilu'im* found employment in the *moshava* (agricultural settlement) of Rishon Lezion, which was administered by Baron Rothschild's functionaries. But the observant residents were wary of the secular *Bilu'im*, and many of the latter left the country. Yet, a small group remained behind and established the *moshava* of



Gedera on land purchased from the village of Katra in 1883. In total, 740 acres were acquired in the region; the land was then divided into 25 plots.

On December 14, 1884, Tzvi Horovitz and Shlomo Zalman Zuckerman arrived in Katra. Since it was the second night of Chanukah, they lit two bonfires, which, in essence, denoted Gedera's establishment.

The *Bilu'im* had neither plow nor seeds and little – if any – other equipment. Slowly, they solicited funding and were able to begin working the land. Under Ottoman Law, one who wanted to erect a building had to apply for a special license

- which was never granted to Jews. Furthermore, the Arabs and Turks would inevitably report any newly constructed building to the Ottoman authorities, who would promptly destroy it. Thus, when cattle and horses were brought to the *moshava*, the *Bilu'im* were forced to dig a large, roofed pit in order to house their livestock. Since then, the site has been referred to as "*Bor HaBilu'im*" (the *Bilu'im*'s pit).

Little by little, new members began arriving, and Gedera became the first *moshava* to achieve financial independence, without the Baron's assistance.

All *moshava* decisions were made democratically.

During World War I, the Turks confiscated the horses, and Gedera's men fled the *moshava* and hid, in order to avoid being drafted by the Turkish army. In fact, a third of the residents left during that period. However, after the war, the *moshava* grew and flourished – mainly as a result of new infrastructure and roads.

Today, the *moshava* numbers over 100,000 residents.

Yechiel Michel Pines, one of the movement's leaders, wrote the Bilu anthem.

According to an intriguing story, Rabbi Dov Ber Schneuri, Chabad's Mittlerer (Middle) Rebbe, was told about the Bilu movement. His response was that if the *Bilu'im* had not cut off the end of the *pasuk* and had left it as "*Beit Yaakov, lechu v'nelchah b'or Hashem*" ("House of Yaakov, come and let us go **in the light of Hashem**"), he would have brought 10,000 Chassidim with them to *Eretz Yisrael*.

After reading, please be sure to place this Torah Sheet in a Geniza (Sheimus)

**Torah MiTzion** establishes Religious Zionist Kollels (centers of Jewish learning and outreach) in Diaspora Jewish communities to strengthen the study of Torah, Jewish identity, the unity of the Jewish people, and the connection between Torah study and Israel.

The Kollels, led by a *Rosh Kollel*, are comprised of Israeli shlichim (emissaries) - married men and their wives, or young single men, graduates of Yeshivot Hesder in Israel - who serve in the communities for a period of one-three years.

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**The Head Office in Jerusalem:**  
**Beit Meir**, 54 King George Street  
 PO Box 71109  
 Jerusalem, 91710  
 Israel

**Tel:** +972-2-620-9020  
**Email:** office@torahmitzion.org  
**Look for us on the web:** www.TorahMiTzion.org

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