

## פרשת ויגש

At first, it may seem like an inane question. Since there is a Mitzvah of **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ**<sup>1</sup>, why isn't there a Bracha for us to make at the fulfilment of this Mitzvah – just like we recite B'rachos on the fulfilment of almost all *Mitzvos A'seh* – positive commandments?

The initial answer that we may give to respond to such a question is that such a blessing would be one made over our emotions - love is an emotion – and thus we do not recite blessings over emotions and feelings.

After all, there is a prime Mitzvah of **לֵאמֹר... לֵאמֹר אֱלֹהֵינוּ**<sup>2</sup>, You are to love Hashem your G-d, and we do not make a blessing over the fulfilment of that commandment.

Our answer to such a comparison between loving Hashem and loving others may be most correct. The Mitzvah to love Hashem is an ongoing commandment, a **מִצְוַת תְּמִידוּת**, whereas the Mitzvah of **וְאָהַבְתָּ רֵעִים**, loving our fellow Jew, does not have such a definition.

On the other hand, and upon further contemplation, we may gain a different perspective and a somewhat different answer than our immediate response of negating blessings for **וְאָהַבְתָּ רֵעִים** and **וְאָהַבְתָּ הַשֵּׁם**.

We learn in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Siman 225 (s'if 1):

הַרְוָאָה אֶת חֲבִירוֹ לְאַחַר שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם אֹמֵר: שֶׁחַיִּינוּ, וְאַחַר שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ מְבָרֵךְ:  
מַחִיָּה מֵתִים, וְהוּא שֶׁחֲבִיב עָלָיו וְשֶׁמַּח בְּרֵאִיוֹתָיו.

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<sup>1</sup> We read (Vayikro Perek 19/Posuk 18):

לֹא תִקֵּם וְלֹא תִטֹּר אֶת בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה' :  
Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge against the children of your people; you should love your neighbor like yourself; I am Hashem.

<sup>2</sup> The entire verse (D'vorim Perek 6/Posuk 5) reads:

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ :  
You should love Hashem your G-d with your entire heart, with your entire soul and with your entire might.

One who sees his friend after thirty days says the Bracha of שהחינו and one who sees his friend after twelve months recites the Bracha of מחיה המתים<sup>3</sup>. This is in a case where he loves him and is happy when seeing him.

Mishnah Brurah explains in sif koton 1:

חבירו - ואין חילוק בין איש לאשה והיינו אם רואה אשתו ואמו בתו ואחותו כיון שהוא שמח ונהנה בראייתם. כתבו הפוסקים דאם ראה חכם מחכמי ישראל מברך עליו אשר חלק וכדלעיל בסימן רכ"ד ס"ו<sup>4</sup> וגם שהחינו אם הוא שלשים יום שלא ראה אותו:

*His friend* – there is no difference between a man and a woman. That is, if he sees his wife, his mother, his daughter or his sister, since he is happy and enjoys seeing them, [he recites these blessings].

The *Poskim* write: if one sees a wise man of the wise men of Israel, he recites the blessing of “He gives a portion of His wisdom...” as we learned above in Siman 224/sif 6 as well as שהחינו, if he had not seen him for thirty days.

In sif koton 4 Mishnah Brurah writes:

מחיה המתים - ואז אין מברך שהחינו. וטעם ברכה זו כתב בחידושי אגדות לפי שבכל שנה האדם נידון בראש השנה ויום הכיפורים אם למות אם לחיים ואם רואהו אחר ראש השנה ויום הכיפורים זה ואחר כך אין רואה אותו עד אחר ראש השנה ויום הכיפורים הבא הרי עבר עליו דין אם למות אם לאו ועל כן אומר ברוך מחיה מתים שניצול מדין מיתה בראש השנה ויום הכיפורים:

*Mechayeh HaMeisim* – Then he does not make *Shehecheyanu*.

The reason for this blessing is as the Maharsha wrote in his *Chiddushei Aggados* – since every year a person is judged on Rosh Hashanah and Yom HaKippurim for death and for life, when he sees him after this Rosh Hashanah and Yom HaKippurim but does not see him until after the following Rosh Hashanah and Yom HaKippurim, then the person was judged again for death

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<sup>3</sup> As Mishnah Brurah points out, these are complete blessings, beginning with:  
ברוך אתה ה' א...לקינו מלך העולם...

Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, King of the Universe...

<sup>4</sup> That *s'if* reads in its entirety:

הרואה חכמי ישראל, אומר: ברוך אתה א...לקינו מלך העולם שחלק מחכמתו ליראיו.  
One who sees the wise men of Israel says, ‘Blessed are You Hashem our G-d King of the Universe who has given a portion of His wisdom to those who fear Him.

or not. Therefore he recites *Mechayeh HaMeisim* because his friend was saved from a decree of death on Rosh Hashanah and Yom HaKippurim<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, even though these are not blessings recited specifically for the fulfillment of אהבת רעים, they are certainly related.

And thus we come to our Parshas Vayigash with the momentous reunion between father and son and son and father. We come to the emotionally-laden reunification of Yaakov Ovinu with Yosef and Yosef with his father.

We are quite aware of the emotions and passions that are elicited here. We learned that for twenty-two years, from the disappearance of Yosef until meeting his father once more, Yaakov was in a state of constant mourning<sup>6</sup>.

We learn from the question that Yosef asked his brothers when he met Binyamin, prior to his revealing himself, Yosef wanted to know if his father was yet alive<sup>7</sup>.

And thus, it with suspense and anticipation that we await their reunion and then have the opportunity to view it.

We read (B'reishis Perek 46/P'sukim 29-30):

וַיֹּאסֶר יוֹסֵף מְרֻכָּבָתוֹ וַיַּעַל לְקִרְיַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִיו גִּשְׁנָה וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו וַיִּפֹּל עַל צַוְאָרָיו וַיִּבְךְּ  
עַל צַוְאָרָיו עוֹד: וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵל יוֹסֵף אֲמוּנָתָה הַפְּעַם אַחֲרֵי רְאוּתִי אֶת פְּנֵיךָ כִּי עוֹדָךְ  
חַי:

Yosef harnessed his chariot and he went up to meet Yisroel his father to Goshen; and he appeared to him and he fell upon his neck and he cried upon his neck more. Yisroel said to Yosef, 'I will now at this time [be ready] to die after I have seen your face that you are still alive.'

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<sup>5</sup> Mishnah Brurah advises against saying these blessings when a person is aware that the other is living and well, even if he has not seen him for a long period of time.

<sup>6</sup> See B'reishis Perek 37/Posuk 35 and Rashi there.

<sup>7</sup> We read (Perek 43/P'sukim 27-28):

וַיִּשְׁאַל לָהֶם לְשָׁלוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר הַשָּׁלוֹם אֲבִיכֶם הַזֶּקֶן אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם הַעוֹדָנִי חַי: וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׁלוֹם לְעַבְדְּךָ  
לְאַבְיָנוּ עוֹדָנִי חַי וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ:

Yosef asked them about their welfare; He said, 'Is your elderly father well, the one about whom you spoke – is he still living?' They said, 'Your servant, our father, is well; he yet lives'; they bowed and prostrated themselves.

Rashi writes:

ויאסור יוסף מרכבתו - הוא עצמו אסר את הסוסים למרכבה להזדרז לכבוד אביו:  
*He harnessed his chariot* – Yosef himself tied the horses to the chariot to be swift in giving honor to his father.

Even without the commentary of Rashi we are drawn to the fact that the Torah tells us that Yosef cried profusely. Would we not expect that Yaakov cried as well? Why doesn't the Torah tell us that?

Rashi provides the answer based on the Midrash Rabbah here. He writes:

ויבך על צואריו עוד - אבל יעקב לא נפל על צוארי יוסף ולא נשקו, ואמרו רבותינו  
שהיה קורא את שמע:  
*He cried upon his neck more* – but Yaakov did not fall on the neck of Yosef nor did he kiss him. Our Rabbis said that Yaakov was reciting Shema'.

Of course, when we first learn this explanation of our verse that Chazal present to us we are stunned by the greatness of Yaakov Ovinu. Here was this long-awaited moment – and Yaakov Ovinu gave precedence to the Mitzvah of the recitation of Shema over the extraordinary love he felt for his son Yosef!

While that point is no doubt true, upon second thought we wonder why, if the time for the recitation of Shema' had arrived – why wasn't Yosef saying Shema' as well?

If the answer given to such a question was that Yosef was unable to control his emotions – because he should have been reciting Shema' as well, then we have an implied criticism of Yosef. Perhaps.

This question is raised by our commentators. Some say that perhaps Yosef had already completed his recitation of Shema'. Others say that Yosef also was reciting Shema' but he was allowed to interrupt its recitation because there are times that when honor is due to a great person that the recitation of Shema' may be interrupted, under very specific conditions<sup>8</sup>.

Another explanation offered was that Yosef was about to recite Shema' as well but he had seen his father first and he had begun going to him to fulfil the Mitzvah of

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<sup>8</sup> See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Siman 66.

*Kibbud Av* and *Yiras Av* and he applied the principle of המצוה פטור מן המצוה, one who is actively involved in the fulfilment of one Mitzvah is exempt from the fulfilment of another Mitzvah if he cannot do both at the same time<sup>9</sup>.

Yosef's Mitzvah of *Kibbud Av* and *Yiras Av* certainly included kissing and hugging his father and once he was involved in such a Mitzvah he was allowed to postpone his recitation of Shema'.

Or perhaps, we have no questions regarding Yosef. But, we do stand in awe of Yaakov Ovinu who was able to withhold his emotions to such an extreme extent that his desire to fulfil the Mitzvah of Krias Shema' overcame his great emotions.

And thus we are reminded of Aharon HaKohen HaGodol who, when confronted with the death of his two sons on the very day that he reached the pinnacle of his success – we read (Vayikro Perek 10/P'sukim 2-3):

וַיֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל אוֹתָם וַיָּמָתוּ לִפְנֵי ה': וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אַהֲרֹן הוּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר  
ה' לֵאמֹר בְּקִרְבִי אֶקְדָּשׁ וְעַל פְּנֵי כָל הָעָם אֶכְבֹּד וַיִּדַּם אַהֲרֹן:

A fire went out from before Hashem and it consumed them and they died before Hashem. Moshe said to Aharon, 'This is what Hashem spoke, "I will be sanctified with those close to Me and I will be honored upon the face of the entire nation"; Aharon was silent.

Rashi writes there:

וידם אהרן - קבל שכר על שתיקתו...

*Aharon was silent* – He was rewarded for his silence<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, the ability to be silent in the face of such a tragedy was beyond the ability of the average person and for that reason Aharon was rewarded.

And we are reminded of the greatness of Bruriah, wife of Rabi Meir at the time of their great tragedy, as we read in the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Mishlei 964):

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Mishneh Torah LaRambam Hilchos Sukka Perek 6/Halachah 4 and Hilchos I'shus Perek 15/Halachah 2.

<sup>10</sup> In the continuation of this Rashi we learn what the reward was.

אשת חיל מי ימצא<sup>11</sup>, אמרו מעשה היה ברבי מאיר שהיה יושב במנחה בשבת ודורש ומתו שני בניו, מה עשתה אמן הניחה שניהם על המטה ופירשה סדין עליהם, במוצאי שבת בא רבי מאיר מבית המדרש אמר לה היכן שני בני אמרה לו לבית המדרש הלכו, אמרו לה צפיתי בבית המדרש ולא ראיתים, נתנה לו הכוס של הבדלה והבדיל וחזר, ואמר לה היכן שני בני אמרה לו פעמים שהלכו למקום פלוני ועכשו הם באים, הקריבה לפניו לאכול, לאחר שאכל אמרה לו רבי שאלה יש לי לשאול, אמר לה אמרי שאלתך, אמר לו רבי קודם היום בא אחד ונתן לי פקדון ועכשו בא ליטול אחזיר לו או לאו, אמר לה בתי מי שיש לו פקדון אינו צריך להחזיר לרבו, אמרה לו חוץ מדעתך לא הייתי מחזרת אותו, מה עשתה תפשה אותו בידו והעלהו לחדר והקריבה אותו למטה, נטלה הסדין מעליהם וראה שניהם מתים מונחים על המטה, התחיל בוכה ואומר בני בני רבי, בני בדרך ארץ ורבי שהיו מאירין עיני בתורתך, באותה שעה אמרה ליה רבי לא כך אמרת לי שאנו צריכין להחזיר פקדון לרבו, כך ה' נתן וה' לקח יהי שם ה' מבורך,

*Who will find a valiant woman*-The Chachamim told of an event regarding Rabi Meir who was sitting in the Beis Midrash Shabbos afternoon and teaching when his two sons died. What did their mother do? She placed both on the bed and covered them with the sheet. On Motzaei Shabbos, Rabi Meir returned from the Beis HaMidrash and asked, 'Where are my two sons?' His wife said, 'They went to the Beis HaMisrash.' He said, 'I looked for them there and I did not see them.' She gave him the cup upon which to recite Havdalah and he did and then asked again, 'where are my two sons?'; she said, 'Sometimes they go to that one's house and they are coming.' She gave him something to eat and when he finished she said, 'Rabi – I have a question to ask.' He said, 'ask your question'. She said, 'Before today someone came and gave me an article to watch and now he wants it back. Should I return it?' He said to her, 'My daughter, if one has an article that belongs to someone else, doesn't he have to return it to its owner?' She said, 'Without your knowledge, I would not return it.' What did she do? She took him by the hand and took him up to the room and brought him near the bed. She took off the sheet and he saw his two sons lying dead in the bed. He began crying and said, 'My sons, my sons. My rebbe, my rebbe. My sons who treated me with the utmost respect and my rebbes who enlightened my

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<sup>11</sup> The Posuk (Mishlei Perek 31/Posuk 10) reads in its entirety:

אִשֶּׁת חַיִּל מִי יִמְצָא וְרָחֵק מִפְּנִינִים מְכָרָה:

A woman of valor, who can find? Far beyond pearls is her worth.

eyes with their words of Torah. At that moment she said to him, 'Rabi, did you not tell me that we have to return that which was entrusted to us to its rightful owner? So, it is, 'Hashem gave and Hashem took. May the Name of Hashem be blessed'<sup>12</sup>.

Thus we remain moved and astounded by the greatness unique individuals are able to attain.

However, in his commentary on Rashi, *Gur Aryeh*, the Maharal MiPrag offers a new interpretation and a new outlook regarding Yaakov Ovinu's recitation of Shema' upon seeing Yosef. He writes:

אמנם יש לדעת ענין קריאת שמע שהיה קורא ובזה יתורץ מה שלא היה קורא יוסף קריאת שמע, לפי שכאשר בא יעקב וראה את יוסף בנו מלך, בא בלבו אהבתו ויראתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא איך מדותיו הם טובות ושלימות, ומשלם שכר טוב ליראיו. וזהו מדת החסידים אשר יקרה להם טוב מתדבקים אל הקדוש ברוך הוא על הטובות והאמת שעשה עמהם. וזהו קריאת שמע שבו נזכר ייחוד מלכות שמים (דברים ו/ד<sup>13</sup>) ואהבתו (שם שם ה<sup>14</sup>). וראוי היה לקרות קריאת שמע כאשר בא אליו יוסף אחר הצער הגדול אשר היה לו בעבורו, ועתה ראה אותו מלך, היה אוהב את הקדוש ברוך הוא אשר עושה לו זה, וקבל מלכותו ואהבתו ויראתו, וזהו נכון למבין:

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<sup>12</sup> We read the words of Iyov in his Sefer, Perek 1/Posuk 21):

וַיֹּאמֶר עָרֵם יֵצְאתִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי וְעָרֵם אָשׁוּב שָׁמָּה ה' נָתַן וְה' לָקַח יְהִי שֵׁם ה' מְבֹרָךְ:  
Iyov said, 'I came out naked from the stomach of my mother and I shall return there naked; Hashem gave and Hashem took; may the Name of Hashem be blessed.

<sup>13</sup> That verse reads in its entirety:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶחָד...לְקִינוּ ה' אֶחָד:  
Hear Israel, Hashem is our G-d; Hashem is One.

<sup>14</sup> That verse reads in its entirety:

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֶלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ:  
You should love Hashem your G-d with your entire heart, with your entire soul and with your entire might.

In fact, it is necessary to understand the matter of *Krias Shema* that Yaakov was reciting and, with that understanding, the matter will be explained regarding why Yosef was not reciting *Krias Shema*'.

The matter is such: when Yaakov came and saw that his son Yosef was a king, at that moment his love and fear for Hashem entered into his heart – that Hashem's attributes were good and complete and that He gives reward to those who fear Him [and thus Yaakov recited *Shema*' even though it was not the time of day that required its recitation].

Such are the attributes of the pious ones that when something good occurs to them they cleave to Hashem for all the good and truth that He does with them. And that is the *Krias Shema*' that is mentioned here – to remember the Oneness of the Reign of Heaven and our love for Him. And thus it was proper to recite *Shema*' when Yosef came after the great pain that Yaakov suffered because of him.

And now Yaakov saw Yosef as a king and thus Yaakov loved HaKodosh Boruch Hu Who did this for him and he accepted upon himself the Yoke of G-d's Kingship and his love for Him and his fear of Him.

This is the correct explanation for a person of understanding.

And, before we comment upon the greatness of Yaakov Ovinu, let us learn a Halachah that may be unknown to many, one that seems to be dishonored quite often.

We read in Shulchan Aruch (ibid. Siman 98/s'if 3):

לואסור לאדם לנשק בניו הקטנים בבית הכנסת, כדי לקבוע בלבו שאין אהבה  
כאהבת המקום:

It is forbidden for a person to kiss his little children in Shul in order to affix in his heart that there is no love like the love for the Omnipresent – Hashem.

And now we return to our Parshas Vayigash, keeping this Halachah in mind.

Yaakov Ovinu was truly grateful that he was able to see Yosef once more – but not just the seventeen-year old Yosef whom he scolded<sup>15</sup>, but the thirty-nine year old Yosef who reigned in Egypt.

Yaakov Ovinu sight of Yosef aroused Yaakov's *Ahavas Hashem* and he expressed that love by reciting Shema'.

He recited Shema' because in it we note the Oneness of G-d. It is He Who does all.

Yaakov Ovinu had no better way to express his joy other than to note that it is the Ribbono Shel Olom Who is the Creator and the Director<sup>16</sup> of all existence<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> We read (Perek 37/Posuk 10):

וַיִּסְפֹּר אֶל אָבִיו וְאֶל אֶחָיו וַיִּגְעַר בּוֹ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מָה הַחֲלוּם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חִלַּמְתָּ הַבּוֹא נִבּוֹא אִנִּי  
וְאִמְךָ וְאֶחָיֶךָ לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לְךָ אֶרְצָה:

Yosef told his father and his brothers and his father censured him and he said to him, 'Are we supposed to come, me, your mother and your brothers, to bow down before you to the ground?'

<sup>16</sup> In the pithy summaries of the Thirteen *Ikkarim* of faith that Rambam teaches in his *Peirush HaMishnayos* to *Perek Cheilek* in Masseches Sanhedrin, we read the summary of the first principle that says 'I believe that Hashem is the בורא ומנהיג, the Creator and the Director of all.

<sup>17</sup> In the first year of our Aliya, at the time of Yom Yerushalayim, the now-defunct Arutz 7 radio station played a few words spoken by Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook ZT"l, the Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Merkaz HaRav Kook spoke at the thanksgiving dinner at the Yeshiva following Israel's victory in the Six Day War and our repossession of the 'Old City' of Yerushalayim and the Kotel HaMaaravi.

In the middle of expounding regarding the greatness of those events, Rav Tzvi Yehuda shouted out:

שמע ישראל ה' א...ל'קיננו ה' אחד!

I was listening to this while I was driving and when I heard the fervor and the sanctity of the words of Rav Tzvi Yehuda that were spoken in 1967, I was so stunned, so many years later –in 1986, that I pulled the car over to the side of the road to take in the impact of those most powerful words said with such powerful *emunah*.

That impression remains vivid within me these thirty-three years later.

I have spoken to a number of people who were present at that thanksgiving dinner and they said that the impact was profound beyond words.

However, it would be an error to state that since one is to love G-d above all, that there is no place or room for love for others, and that the love of G-d, by definition, disallows love for anyone else.

Such a statement is patently false. Among other sources to deny the validity of such a statement is the Torah's own command of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**.

And thus we must revisit the Halachah that we learned above that forbids kissing our children in Shul.

The Halachah does not come to disallow the love for our children; rather it places the love for Hashem at the very top of a hierarchy from which the lower rungs on that hierarchy are qualitatively, as well as quantitatively, infinitely distant.

But, the explanation is that when we love Hashem truly, as did Yaakov Ovinu, and when our love of others is not only an emotional tie but is based on our love of G-d – i.e. that is that there is an objective Torah reason for that love – than that love of others is permanent because it stems from our love of G-d.

The Mishnah in Ovos has taught us that there is love which is fleeting, love without objective value, and there is a love which is permanent because it is not based on momentary whims.

So we read there (Perek 5/Mishnah 16):

כל אהבה שהיא תלויה בדבר בטל דבר בטלה אהבה ושאינה תלויה בדבר אינה בטלה לעולם איזו היא אהבה התלויה בדבר זו אהבת אמנון ותמר ושאינה תלויה בדבר זו אהבת דוד ויהונתן:

Love which is dependent on something external, once that external matter is voided, so is the love voided. Love that is not based on something external is never voided. What is an example of love based on an external matter? The love of Amnon for Tamar.

What is an example of love not based on an external matter? The love between Dovid and Yehonoson.

Let us ask, upon what was the love of Dovid and Yehonoson based? The answer is that it was based upon the values of the succession of the *Malchus* of Israel. Yehonoson knew that the Novi had decreed that the reign of Shaul was limited to

him alone and would not continue to his future generations. Yehonoson knew that there would not be a 'Saulistic' dynasty but, rather, a Davidic one.

The love of Yehonoson for Dovid HaMelech was based on true values and just like those values were eternal so was the love that derived from those values eternal.

Thus, rather than one's love for one's children being denied with the prohibition of kissing them in Shul, the love is in fact enhanced because the love for our children, and all those who are dear to us, comes from the Torah values with which we have been instilled and which we have adopted and internalized.

And with this understanding, we can have a new insight into a verse that seems most perplexing.

At the beginning of Parshas Vayeshev we read (B'reishis Perek 37/Posuk 3):

וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶהָב אֶת יוֹסֵף מִכָּל בְּנָיו כִּי בֶן זִקְנִים הוּא לוֹ וְעָשָׂה לוֹ כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים:

Yisroel loved Yosef more than his sons because he was a *ben zekunim* for him; Yisroel made Yosef a cloak with silk.

Rashi writes:

בן זקונים - שנולד לו לעת זקנתו. ואונקלוס תרגם בר חכים הוא ליה כל מה שלמד משם ועבר מסר לו.

*Ben zekunim* – Yosef was born to Yaakov in the latter's old age. Onkelos translated: 'he was a smart son' – all that Yaakov learned in the Yeshiva of *Shem v'Ever*, he transmitted to him.

It is certainly difficult to understand *ben zekunim* as the child born in his old age – since there were children born after Yosef to Yaakov.

If, however, we understand that it was the fact that Yosef in particular was the recipient of the Torah of Yaakov, the *masores* of the Patriarchs, then that love was not purely emotional. It was based on the objective fact that at that time Yaakov saw Yosef as the Keeper of the Word, as the one who would be most likely to be responsible for the transmission of Torah to the fledgling nation that was now being established because the wisdom of Torah was transmitted to Yosef, primarily.

If that is so, then we can understand why the Torah calls Yaakov Ovinu by the name of 'Yisroel' in this verse.

Yisroel is the name of the destiny of our people. *Yisroel* saw at that moment that it was most likely that in Yosef he could entrust that sacred task of continuing the Masores.

And if this point is correct, we may look again at the meeting of Yaakov and Yosef and Yaakov's recitation of Shema' precisely because it invoked his love of G-d and it was that objective love that enhanced and intensified his love of Yosef:

וַיֹּאסֶר יוֹסֵף מְרֻכָּבָתוֹ וַיַּעַל לְקִרְאֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִיו גִּשְׁנָה וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו וַיִּפֹּל עַל צַוְאָרָיו וַיִּבְרַךְ  
עַל צַוְאָרָיו עוֹד: וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל יוֹסֵף אֲמוּנָתָה הַפְּעַם אַחֲרֵי רְאוּתִי אֶת פְּנֵיךָ כִּי עוֹדָךְ  
חַי:

Yosef harnessed his chariot and he went up to meet Yisroel his father to Goshen; and he appeared to him and he fell upon his neck and he cried upon his neck more. Yisroel said to Yosef, 'I will now at this time [be ready] to die after I have seen your face that you are still alive.'

It was not 'Yaakov' who was seeing Yosef after so many years; it was *Yisroel*. It was not *Yaakov* who did not immediately respond to his son's loving embrace; it was *Yisroel*. It was *Yisroel*, whose name gives expression to the destiny of our People to be intertwined eternally in love and fealty to G-d.

The eternal value of the love of G-d was the *only* way that *Yisroel* could express his love for Yosef which was to be eternal.

As we approach the end of the beginning, the end of Sefer B'reishis, we are reminded that the love of G-d which we express by our recitation of Shema' and our fulfilment of His Mitzvos does not detract in any way from our relationships with those closest to us, those whom we love the most.

Rather, it is our love of G-d that is our means of insuring that our love of all those whom we hold dear will be true and enduring because it will be based on the values that the Ribbono Shel Olom has taught us.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock