

יד וַיָּשָׁב יוֹסֵף מִצְרַיִם הוּא וְאָחָיו וְכָל־הָעֲלִיּוֹת לְקַבֵּר אֶת־אָבִיו אַחֲרַי קָבְרוּ אֶת־אָבִיו:
טו וַיִּרְאוּ אֶחָיו־יוֹסֵף כִּי־מֵת אָבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יִשְׁטַמְנוּ יוֹסֵף וְהַשָּׁב יָשִׁיב לָנוּ אֶת כָּל־הָרָעָה
אֲשֶׁר גָּמְלָנוּ אֹתוֹ:

טז וַיֹּצִיאוּ אֶל־יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר אַבִּיךָ צִוָּה לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ לֵאמֹר:

יז כֹּה־תֹאמְרוּ לְיוֹסֵף אֲנֵנּוּ שָׂא נָא פְּשַׁע אַחֲיָךְ וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי־רָעָה גָּמְלוּךָ וְעַתָּה שָׂא נָא
לִפְשַׁע עַבְדֵי אֱלֹהֵי אַבִּיךָ וַיִּבֶךְ יוֹסֵף בְּדַבְרָם אֵלָיו:

יח וַיִּלְכוּ גַם־אָחָיו וַיִּפְּלוּ לִפְנָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ הִנְנּוּ לְךָ לְעַבְדִּים:

יט וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף אַל־תִּירְאוּ כִּי הִתַּחַת אֱלֹהִים אָנִי:

כ וְאַתֶּם חַשְׁבֹּתֶם עָלַי רָעָה אֱלֹהִים חֲשַׁבָה לְטֹבָה לְמַעַן עֲשֶׂה כִּי־וּם הַזֶּה לְהַחֲיֵת עַם־רַב:

כא וְעַתָּה אַל־תִּירְאוּ אֲנִי אֶכְלָל אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת־טַפְכֶם וַיִּנַּחֵם אוֹתָם וַיְדַבֵּר עִלְלָבָם:

14 And Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

15 Now Joseph's brothers saw that their father had died, and they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us and return to us all the evil that we did to him."

16 So they sent a message to Joseph, to say, "Your father commanded [us] before his death, saying,

17 'So shall you say to Joseph, "Please, forgive now your brothers' transgression and their sin, for they did evil to you. Now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." ' " Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

18 His brothers also went and fell before him, and they said, "Behold, we are your slaves."

19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid, for am I in place of God?

20 Indeed, you intended evil against me, [but] God designed it for good, in order to bring about what is at present to keep a great populace alive.

21 So now do not fear. I will sustain you and your small children." Thus he did comfort them and speak straight to their hearts.

“When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead.” What does the text mean by “saw?” They perceived the effects of his death on Joseph. They were used to dining with Joseph and [were accustomed to] Joseph’s keeping on close terms with them out of respect for his father. But as soon as Jacob died, Joseph ceased to be on close terms with them. (*Rashi, drawing from the Midrash below:*)

“What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrong that we did him!” (Gen. 50:15) Rabbi Levi said [that they feared this because] “Joseph no longer invited them to dine with him.” Said Rabbi Tanchuma, “He meant it for the sake of heaven. Joseph said, “Father used to seat me higher than Judah, who is king, and higher than Reuben, who is the firstborn. Now it is not right that I should sit higher than them.” But the brothers understood matters differently and said, “What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us.” (*B’reishit Rabbah 100:8*)

Another Midrash:

“When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us!” What did they see that made them afraid? As they were returning from burying their father, they saw that Joseph turned off the road and went to look at the pit into which his brothers had cast him. Upon seeing this, they said, “He still bears a grudge in his heart. Now that our father is dead, he will make his hatred of us felt.” But in fact, Joseph’s motive was a pious one: He wanted to utter a blessing for the miracle wrought for him in that place. (*Tanchuma, Va-y’chi 17*)

“Your father left this instruction.” They modified the words of Jacob in this matter in the interest of peace. For Jacob did not instruct thus, since Joseph was not

suspect in his eyes. (*Rashi on Gen 50:16, drawing on the following Talmudic and Midrashic teachings:*)

And Rabbi Ile'a said in the name of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon: It is permitted for a person to depart from the truth in a matter that will bring peace, as it is stated: "Your father commanded before he died, saying: So you shall say to Joseph: Please pardon your brothers' crime, etc." (Genesis 50:16-17) Jacob never issued this command, but his sons falsely attributed this statement to him in order to preserve peace between them and Joseph.

Rabbi Natan says: It is a **mitzva** to depart from the truth in order to preserve peace, **as it is stated: "And Samuel said: How can I go, and Saul will hear and kill me" (I Samuel 16:2).** God responded in the next verse that Samuel should say he went to sacrifice an offering, indicating that God commands one to lie in order to preserve peace.

It was **taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael: Great is peace, as even the Holy One, Blessed be He, departed from the truth for it. As, initially it is written that Sarah said of Abraham: "And my lord is old (Genesis 18:12) and in the end it is written that God told Abraham that Sarah said: "And I am old" (Genesis 18:13.)** God adjusted Sarah's words in order to spare Abraham hurt feelings that might lead Abraham and Sarah to quarrel. (*Tractate Yevamot 65b*)

How do we dance before the bride and praise her? The academy of Shammai say, the bride as she is we praise whatever good qualities we genuinely perceive. And the academy of Hillel say, "A lovely and gracious bride". The academy of Shammai said to the academy of Hillel, And what if the bride is lame or blind, you say to her "lovely and gracious"? Does the Torah not say, "Distance yourself from falsehood" Exodus 23:7)?...Hillel's position is given precedence. From here the Sages said: A person's disposition should always be empathetic with all people. (*Tractate Ketubot 17a*)

Hillel says, "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving the creatures and bringing them closer to Torah." (*Pirkei Avot 1:12*)

"Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace": They explained in Avot DeRabbi Natan (700-900 CE, Babylonia) how Aaron loved peace: When he would see two people quarreling, he would go to each one of them without the knowledge of his fellow and say to him, "Behold how your fellow is regretting and afflicting himself that he sinned against you; and he told me that I should come to you so that you will forgive him." And as a result of this, when they bumped into each other, they would kiss each other. And how would he bring people closer to the Torah? When he would know about someone that he committed a sin, he would befriend him and show him a friendly demeanor; and that man would be embarrassed and say [to himself], "If that righteous man would know my evil deeds, how much would he distance himself from me?" And as a result of this, [that man] would change for the better. And this is what the prophet testifies about [Aharon] (Malachi 2), "In peace and in straightness did he walk with Me and he brought back many from sinning."

Mishnah Gittin 5:8

These are the matters that the Sages **instituted on account of the ways of peace**, i.e., to foster peace and prevent strife and controversy:

> At public readings of the Torah, **a priest reads first, and after him a Levite, and after him an Israelite**. The Sages instituted this order **on account of the ways of peace**, so that people should not quarrel about who is the most distinguished member of the community.

> **A joining of courtyards is placed in an old house** where it had regularly been placed **on account of the ways of peace**.

> **The cistern that is nearest to the irrigation channel** that supplies water to several pits or fields **is filled first on account of the ways of peace**. They established a fixed order for the irrigation of fields, so that people would not quarrel over who is given precedence.

> **Animals, birds, or fish** that were caught in **traps** are not acquired by the one who set the traps until he actually takes possession of them. Nevertheless, if another person comes and takes them, it **is considered robbery on account of the ways of peace**.

> If a **poor person gleans olives at the top of an olive tree** and olives fall to the ground under the tree, then taking those olives **that are beneath it** is considered **robbery on account of the ways of peace**.

> **One does not protest against poor gentiles** who come to take **gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and the produce in the corner of the field, which is given to the poor [pe'a]**, although they are meant exclusively for the Jewish poor, **on account of the ways of peace**.

Mishnah Gittin 5:9

> **One woman may lend to another who is suspected** not to observe properly the laws of the Sabbatical year, a flour-sieve, a winnow, a handmill, and a stove, **but she may not assist her to winnow nor to grind**.

> **The wife of a chaver** one who scrupulously observes the detailed laws of tithes and ritual purity **may lend to the wife of an unlearned person, a flour-sieve or a winnow, and may aid her to winnow, to grind, or to sift; but as soon as water is poured over the flour, she may not further assist her, for we may not aid those who transgress the law**.

All of these permitted acts are due to "ways of peace."

>We may aid non-Jews who work in the fields during the Sabbatical year, but we may not aid an Israelite; but we do ask how he is, due to "ways of peace."

Tosefta Gittin 3:18

A city which includes both Jews and Idolaters, the leaders should collect money from both Jews and Idolaters for the sake of peace, and they should support the poor of both Idolaters and Jews for the sake of peace. And they should eulogize and bury the dead of Idolaters for the sake of peace. They should comfort the mourners from among the Idolaters for the sake of peace.

Maimonides Mishneh Torah, Kings and Wars 10:12

And even for non-Jews – our sages commanded us to visit the sick and to bury their dead with the dead of the Jews and to give sustenance to their needy among the needy of the Jews – because of promoting peaceful ways. Behold there is the verse - "Hashem is good with all and he is merciful upon all of his works" (Psalms 145, 9) and it is said "And its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." (Proverbs 3, 17)

Abaye said: The *halakhot* of **the entire Torah** are given **on account of the ways of peace, as it is written: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace"** (Proverbs 3:17)

Once two monks were traveling together when they came upon a woman afraid to cross a rushing river. Despite their vows not to look at or touch women, one of the monks lifted her up and carried her to the other side of the stream. He set her down, and the two monks continued along the road. After six hours of silence, his companion could no longer contain his anger. "How could you break our vows and carry that woman?" he asked. The first monk replied, "I put her down six hours ago, but I see that you are still carrying her!" (a Zen tale)