

Yaakov called for his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves, and I will tell you what will befall you in the End of Days. (49:1)

Rashi teaches that Yaakov *Avinu* was about to reveal the *keitz*, end of *galus*, exile, to his sons, but, at that moment, the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, departed from him. The **Shlah HaKadosh** explains that Yaakov intimated to his sons the key to ending the exile. He told them *Heiasfu!* “Gather together; assemble yourselves as one!” *v’agidah lachem*, “and group yourselves together in one congregation; one assembly, all focused on Hashem. As long as there is *pirud*, separation, divisiveness, among the brothers, the *Shechinah* will remove itself from you, and the *Geulah*, Final Redemption, for which you are all yearning, will not take place.”

The **Kotzker Rebbe, zl**, explains this similarly, but offers a different homiletic twist. *Heiasfu v’agidah lachem*. When each and every one of you is *b’bechinas*, conceptually, as *efes*, nothing; when you rid yourselves of arrogance, and instead take a dim view of yourselves; when you are *efes* in your own eyes; then *v’agidah lachem*, you will merit to become one *agudah*, group. This will bring about *Acharis HaYamim*, the End of Days. When one Jew thinks he is better, more dignified, a greater scholar, more observant, than the other, there simply cannot be a cohesive framework. The exile will sadly continue as long as Jews feel a sense of dominance over one another. We need to feel a sense of *afsius*, insignificance, about ourselves.

Arrogance is offensive. It is the product of a powerful imagination. The *baal gaavah*, egotist, conjures in his mind that he is “it” and that everyone reveres him for his unique qualities, when, in reality, it is far from true. *Sefer HaMeshalim* offers a powerful analogy which reveals the egotist’s true source of arrogance.

A donkey was loaded with strong perfumes, whose odor could be sensed from a distance. Wherever the donkey went, people would make an effort to come in its close proximity. This, of course, went to the donkey’s head. When the donkey returned to its stable, he shared with his “colleagues” his greatness and appeal to the populace.

The next day, the donkey’s load was changed to fertilizer. The pungent odor stretched far and wide. Everyone turned up their nose and distanced themselves from the fetid odor. The foul-smelling burden was a real turn-off – quite unlike the load of the day before. Being a donkey, this also went to his head, as he once again shared with his stable mates, this time the intimidation and fear that he invoked in people. Everyone was running from him out of fright.

The wise fox, who overheard the donkey’s bragging of the last two days, interjected and said, “You are a fool. It is not you whom the people either adore or fear. It is your load. When you carry perfume, they gravitate to the smell; when you carry fertilizer, they cringe and disperse as quickly as possible from the odor. You are nothing. It is what you carry that determines the people’s

reaction.”

I think the above analogy says it all. My byline is unnecessary.