

Yosef went up to bury his father, and with him went up all of Pharaoh's servants... they came to Goren Haatad... and they held a very great and imposing eulogy. (50:7, 10)

Chazal teach that this name (Goren Haatad) is not the name of a place; rather, it is a name given to a singular event and the image it projected, which determined the name of the area. The Kings of Canaan and the Princes of Yishmael worked together to prevent Yaakov *Avinu's* burial and, in order to once and for all, eliminate the Jewish People. They conjectured that following the loss of their holy father, the brothers and their families were at their lowest emotional point. What better time to attack them than at a time in which the Jews were depressed. When they came to attack, however, they noticed that Yosef had removed his crown and placed it on Yaakov's coffin. They relented, and, they likewise, placed their crowns on Yaakov's coffin out of respect for the Patriarch. With a total of thirty-six crowns hanging from it, the Patriarch's coffin resembled a field surrounded by thorns. Thus, the area was named for the unique event.

Clearly, this *Chazal* (*Sotah* 13a, cited by *Rashi*) is teaching us a profound message. Our enemies look for every opportunity to destroy us. What better opportunity than when we are down, mourning the loss of our irreplaceable Patriarch, who has guided us through the exile. At such a moment of heightened grief – during the funeral, when the loss is felt the most, when the grief is overwhelming – now is the time to attack, to once and for all destroy the symbol of truth in the world. With no Yaakov to protect them, the Jews would be finished. So our enemies thought.

When our enemies arrived, armed to the teeth, prepared to wipe out every Jew, they suddenly stopped when they saw Yosef's crown on Yaakov's coffin. It dawned on them that, while Yaakov had died, his legacy would live on in Yosef. Indeed, it was not Yaakov himself who guided the people, but the power that G-d vested within him that gave him the ability to see through life's ambiguities and offer the solution to their problems. As long as each generation rests their "crown" on the one preceding it, the chain of Heavenly guidance -- the power that Hashem invests in each generation's leadership -- remains unbroken. It is when "today's" generation breaks with the past, dons its own crown, and refuses to associate itself with the crown of leadership of past generations that our enemies have the power to destroy us.

Indeed, when the gentiles around us see our stalwart and inextricable bond with the past, our affinity with-- and respect for -- those who preceded us, they realize that such a connection not only empowers us, but it also grounds us in our relationship with Hashem. This was the primary mistake of the various forms of Liberal/ Progressive/ Reform/Secular Movements within the framework of Jewish belief: they broke with the past. In fact, to them, the past was an anathema, the cause of all their problems. As long as each generation rests its "crown" on the one preceding it, the chain of Heavenly guidance, the power of Hashem, which is an inherent component of the leadership of each generation, remains unbroken. When "today's" generation severs its connection with the past -- by donning its own crown, thus refusing to associate itself with the crown of leadership of

past generations – our enemies will have the power to destroy us.

It supposedly began as a reaction, a response to the imaginary needs of the German community, resulting from the inroads and incursions made by the intellectual movement that swept Europe, the Enlightenment. The *Haskalah*, which was inspired by the European Enlightenment, was a movement based upon rationality. Everything had to fit into the limited parameters of reason/rationale in order for it to be acceptable. The movement empowered Jews to think outside their circle of conviction, which had blocked anything that was beyond their realm of comprehension. Jews were encouraged to study secular subjects and to enter the fields of agriculture, crafts, science and the arts. Spending time studying archaic religious tomes of *Talmud* and the Codes was totally nonsensical. During the late eighteenth century, a number of middle class German Jews had already begun to shake off what they perceived to be the intellectual fetters of the ghetto by assuming positions in German society. One important note: There certainly was intellectual activity in ghetto life. What greater cognitive challenge can there be than learning a *blatt Gemorah*? This form of intellectual cognition has been our lifeblood from time immemorial. For those “enlightened” Jews who had managed to acquire somewhat of a secular education, this was insufficient. After all, how could they be accepted into the hedonistic salons of upper European society with knowledge of a *blatt Gemorah*?

This break with the religion of the “past” still recognized the richness of the Hebrew language and the Bible, thus relegating Judaism to the status of ethical culture, rather than a faith-based religion. The manifesto of the *Haskalah* distinguished between the “law of man” and “law of G-d” or suggested, “Be a Jew in your home and a man outside it.”

With this culture in their background, the reformers were able to metastasize their breaks with their Jewish past into a philosophy of Jewish belief and practice. Judaism was to become an evolving religion, transforming in accordance with the times, societal culture, and personal proclivities. In other words: “Do whatever you want; you are still Jewish.”

Their first break with the past was accomplished by abrogating the Divine authorship of the Torah, declaring that only those laws addressing the ethical conduct of man were binding. The rest of *Halachah*, they emphasized, need no longer be viewed as normative. Zionism was renounced, and Yerushalayim was displaced as the center of hope and aspiration for the Jews. Germany became the Jews’ new Zion. This, sadly, was only the beginning.

Did the break with the past help them? Did their immersion in the alien culture, selling their souls to Satan, make a difference in their being accepted by the German *goy*? No! The acculturated Jew did not belong in German high society, regardless of: how much Kant he expounded and regardless of how much of Schiller’s philosophy he had adopted or how much of Beethoven was part of his entertainment culture. He was, first and foremost, a Jew. Indeed, the German blamed all of the decadence in their “pristine” society on the filthy Jews who were less than wholesome, thus undermining their pure Christian values. While the negative reaction did not prevent the Jew from

continuing to debase himself, it sent a message: A Jew should act as a Jew and only then will he achieve respect.

When the *goyim* that came to attack Yosef and his brothers saw that Yaakov had passed his legacy on to his sons and that Hashem still reigned supreme, they acquiesced and even put down their own crowns. You cannot fight a people that is bound to its past, that carries the same banner from generation to generation.

I conclude with an inspirational *Yalkut*, quoted by **Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl**, in his commentary to *Parashas Vayeishev*. "And he (Yosef) came to the house to do his work" (*Bereishis* 39:11). Rabbi Eliezer says, "It was *Shabbos* (so what kind of work did Yosef perform on *Shabbos*? The Torah uses the word *melachto*, his work, and we are exhorted to observe *Shabbos* because, *ki vo shavas mikol melachto*, "He (Hashem) rested from all His labor" The two *melachto*'s, Yosef and *Shabbos*, imply that it was on *Shabbos* that Yosef came to the house of Potifar.) "What was the nature of his work? *Shoneh v'korei mah she'aviv lamdo*, "He (Yosef) would review and study what his father had taught him years earlier." Yosef had never forgotten his father's lessons! His father's Torah continued to guide him even as he reigned as viceroy over the land of Egypt. This is why Yosef was Yosef – and why the *goyim* respected him! The more we remain distinct, we are respected; the more we attempt to be like them, we are resented. Just peruse history to support this hypothesis.