

B'reishit 45:24

He sent his brothers away (*vay'shallach*), and they went.
He said to them: "Do not *tirg'zu* on the way."

Questions:

- 1) Why does it say that Yosef sent his brothers away, rather than that he sent them to his father (*vayishlach*)? Note that in the previous verse he sends things to his father (*shalach*)
- 2) What are the translation and interpretation of *tirgzu*?

Commentaries

Onkelos – Don't fight on the way

Pseudo-Yonatan – Don't fight about selling me on the way lest other travellers on the road become angry with you

Bekhor Shor – Why would they have fought about that? They knew, as Yosef had told them, that the selling had positive effects!

Rashbam and many others – Don't be afraid that you'll be robbed on the way, as

One) you will be under my protection, and as I control all food in a time of famine, no one will dare attack you, or

Two) I am at peace with all Egypt's neighbors

Talmud Taanit, partially cited by Rashi –

One) Don't get too involved in Torah on the way

Two) Don't rush (possibly because that way you will be unable to learn Torah on the way)

Kli Yakar – The two answers in Taanit can be reconciled – learn Torah, but not Torah that requires absolute concentration

My Comments

Bekhor Shor's comment is striking, and unconvincing, in its contention that the brothers were convinced by Yosef's argument that they had done nothing wrong (for that matter, I don't think we should be convinced by it either). Perhaps his claim is not that the ends justified the means, but that the brothers would have no cause to blame each other if the consequences were good – no one had caused anyone harm – and would therefore be able to face their own degree of guilt honestly.

My wife suggests that Yosef had to send the brothers away because

One) they had not come to terms with the wrong they had done him, and did not consider the conversation over

Two) they could not imagine what and how they would tell Yaakov. For that matter, they had no idea what Yosef would tell Yaakov.

The Rashbam approach (especially a) is interesting in that Yosef's words of reassurance are also implicit threats (cf. the fascinating midrashic counterreading of Yehudah's superficially obsequious speech at the opening of this week's portion.) I think it possible that Yosef may not realize this (which ties into his character generally) but doubt that the brothers miss it.

Finally, I am fascinated by the Talmudic reading, which seems to have no contextual relevance at all. Possibly it is simply part of a rabbinic agenda to read Torah into the narrative, eg. the midrashic claim that Yaakov sends Yehudah back first to establish a *beit midrash*. However, Rashi cites these midrashim, although he says they are not *pshat* – in Nechama Leibowitz zt"l's methodology that means they must have a textual advantage, and I'd appreciate suggestions as to what that advantage is, as well as ways to make the midrashim contextually significant.

Shababt Shalom

RK