

שמה קולנו



SHEMA KOLEINU: DIVREI TORAH FROM THE REBBEIM, TALMIDIM, AND FACULTY OF MTA

Parshas Vayigash

פרשת ויגש

It's Not Me, It's You

Pinchas Rosenfeld ('24)

ויפל על-צוארי בנימין-אחיו ויבך ובנימין בכה על-צוארו

"And he [Yosef] fell on the neck of Binyamin, his brother, and Binyamin wept on his neck."

Rashi famously writes on this *passuk* that Yosef was crying because of the two *Batei Mikdash* which would in the future be destroyed in the tribal land of Binyamin, and Binyamin was crying over the *Mishkan Shilo* which would be destroyed in tribal land of Yosef. However, when thinking about this Rashi in the context of history, it is hard to make sense. The *Beis Hamikdash*, in Binyamin's tribal land, was only built after the destruction of the *Mishkan Shilo*, in Yosef's tribal land. Understanding this fact, how could Binyamin be sad about the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo*? That very destruction was what led to the building of the *Beis Hamikdash* within his tribal land!

To explain this question, Rabbi Baruch Simon *shlita* quotes the *Sefer Nechmad Mizahav* by Rabbi Yechezkel of Kozmir *zt"l*. The *passuk* in *Megilas Esther* states that when Esther is preparing to go to the King to plead for Bnei Yisrael, she states "*vetzumu alai, vi'al tochlu vi'al tishtu shloshes yamim... gam ani vina'arosai atzum kein*"—"Fast for me, don't eat or drink for three days, I and my maidens will also fast." This *passuk* is also difficult to understand upon initial reading. Why is Esther telling Mordechai to have Bnei Yisrael fast specifically for her? Shouldn't they all be fasting together for the nation as a whole, as is customary in times of trouble? Furthermore, what is meant when Esther states that "me and my maidens will also fast"? They are the ones in most imminent danger from approaching the king, and the rest of the nation is fasting. Of course they should be fasting, so why does she need to add this on?

From this *passuk*, Rav Yechezkel of Kozmir learns an important lesson about caring for others. When a person worries and cares about the pains of other people more than his own, in turn the success of the

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others brings success for him. If a person cares deeply about another, Hashem will in turn bring the same care to that person. Esther understood this idea, and therefore specifically told Bnei Yisrael to focus on her mission to go to the king, while she herself and her maidens were also fasting for Bnei Yisrael. Each one would focus on the troubles of the other, and ultimately, they hoped that they all would be saved.

The same is true regarding Yosef and Binyamin. Each one cared deeply more about the pain and suffering of others than of their own. Even though the destruction of one led to the building of the other, each brother cared so strongly for the pain of their brother that it didn't matter to them, and they were both weeping over the other. We can see from this idea the power of *achdus*—unity—and caring for others. While it can be easy to focus on our own needs, especially at times of struggle, focusing on the needs of others more is especially important. The unique *achdus* of each person caring for another is more powerful than each person caring just for their own. Let's work on caring more for others and less for our own, and together, *BE"H*, great things can come out of it.

The Importance of a Beis Medrash

Flisha Gamss ('25)

At the start of the sixth *aliyah* of *Parshas Vayigash*, the *passuk* writes,

"וַיֵּצֵא יְהוּדָה שְׁלַח לִפְנֵי אֶלְיָסָף הַהוֹרֵת לִפְנֵי גִשְׁנָה וַיְבֹאוּ אֶרְצָה גִשֶׁן"

"[Yaakov] sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to direct before him the way to Goshen, and they came to the land of Goshen."

At first glance, the actions described in this *passuk* don't make logical sense. If Yehudah was going to show Yaakov the way, wouldn't he need to be with him? If he was far ahead, how could he show him the way? A possible way to reconcile this *passuk* can be found in Rashi, who, quoting a Medrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 95:3), comments on this *passuk* as follows:

"וּמִדְרָשׁ אֵגֵדָה לַהוֹרֹת לִפְנֵי - לְתֵקֵן לוֹ בֵּית תַּלְמוּד שְׁמִשָּׁם תֵּצֵא הוֹרָאָה."

"A Midrashic comment: 'To direct before him' [means] to establish a house of study from which teaching would emanate."

It is evident from this Medrash that, in addition to meaning "to show," the word *lehoros* can also mean "to teach." Rather than having Yehudah physically show Yaakov the way to Goshen, he was, in actuality, instructed to spiritually "show" the family to Goshen. As Yaakov was aware of the risk that came with immigrating to the spiritually devoid Egyptian environment, he needed to have an infrastructure put in place that would allow his offspring to retain their Yiddishkeit. The most effective way of achieving this goal was through the establishment of a yeshiva.

Yaakov was suggesting that when tending to our religious growth, we need to have foresight. Practically, the best way for us to fulfill this is by structuring our learning in advance, and sticking to it. It was in this vein that rebbeim in our yeshiva composed a plan to increase our Torah learning each Shabbos. Now that Shabbos starts early, there is ample time to learn on Friday night, yet many of us lack the structure around which to base our learning. To solve this, our rebbeim arranged for cholent and refreshments to be made available to those learning in local *batei midrash* on Friday night. The result of this initiative? Nearly 50 *talmidim* partaking in organized *Talmud Torah* on a *Leil Shabbos*, all fulfilling the lesson learned from Yaakov Avinu in this week's *parsha*.

Keep on Pushing

Noam Sheffey ('25)

In this week's *parsha* we see the years of famine that Pharaoh dreamt about in last week's *Parsha* come to reality. This famine swept through Mitzrayim and Eretz Canaan. The consequences of this famine could be felt throughout daily life. One of the consequences of the famine was that the *shevatim* had to go down to Mitzrayim to get food. Of course, this story leads to their famous encounter with Yosef. After the tumultuous events that ensued Yosef finally revealed himself to his brothers, and then this news was passed onto Yaakov. Everyone heads down to Mitzrayim, and Pharaoh gives Yosef's family the sweetest piece of land in the entire land of Mitzrayim. This land has of course come to be known as Goshen. Even though it seemed as if everything was going to start looking up for the family of Yosef it didn't take away from the fact that this famine was languishing in Mitzrayim and Eretz Canaan. The Torah mentions that there was no bread for anyone, and Yosef gathered all the money in Mitzrayim to exchange it for grain. Yosef brought this money to Pharaoh, and the whole Mitzrayim proceeded to then beg Yosef

for grain. One could infer that Mitzrayim was going through very tough times, and they lacked the tools to be prosperous. Rav Avraham Ibn Ezra says that the land of Mitzrayim at the time was comparable to a person who has lost his mental sharpness. This comparison of Mitzrayim to a person losing his mental sharpness is something we could keep in mind. We have times in our lives that seem hard, but we must do our best to muscle through the tough times and not lose our state of mind. A famous story is that Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease when he was still in his forties. Despite being diagnosed with this horrible disease he refused to take certain medications over fear that his brain might become foggy or that he might have memory loss. Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel had many obstacles in his life, but despite it being tough for him he demonstrated a tremendous level of *mesiras nefesh* when it came to Torah that none of us can imagine. When we face challenges like Mitzrayim did during the famine we must do our best to make ourselves not be like a person who has lost their mental sharpness and always muscle through.

Miracles in the Mundane

Yehuda Jannenbaum ('26)

The *pesukim* in this week's *parsha* that list all of Leah Imeinu's children conclude with the words,

אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי לֵאָה אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְעֵקֶב... כָּל־נַפֶּשׁ בְּנָיו וּבָנוֹתָיו שְׁלֹשִׁים וְשָׁלֹשׁ

"These are the sons of Leah that she bore to Yaakov... all of his sons and daughters were thirty three" (Bereishis 46:15).

The *passuk* explicitly states that Leah's descendants totalled 33, yet if one were to look closer, and actually count each descendant mentioned in the *pesukim*, he would arrive at the number 32. Where does this additional person come from? Rashi proposes this question, and answers with the following:

"אֵלֶּה זֶה יוֹכֶבֶד שְׁנוּלְדָה בֵּין הַחוֹמוֹת בְּכַנִּיסְתָּן לְעִיר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר 'אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה אֶת־הָלֵלִי בְּמִצְרַיִם' – לִדְתָהּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאִין הוֹרְתָהּ בְּמִצְרַיִם:

"This one [whose name is omitted] is Yocheved, who was born 'between the walls' just as they entered the city, as it is said (*Bamidbar* 26:59), 'whom [her mother] bore to Levi in Egypt' – she was born in Egypt, but she was not conceived in Egypt."

While Rashi's explanation seems to answer our question, the Ibn Ezra is troubled by this interpretation. If it were true that Yocheved was conceived in Eretz Yisrael, it would mean that she would have been 130 years old at the birth of Moshe! If this is the case, why didn't the Torah mention this seemingly supernatural wonder? Moreover, why would the Torah place so much emphasis on Sarah giving birth at 90, if Yocheved gave birth when she was 40 years older at 130? It is due to these issues that the Ibn Ezra understands the extra person as being Yaakov Avinu, and the reason he was counted

A Short Vort

Flisha Cohen ('24)

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־אֶחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעוֹד אֲבִי חַי וְלֹא־יָכֹל אֶחָיו לַעֲנוֹת אוֹתוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלוּ מִפָּנָיו" (בראשית מה:ג)

"Yosef said to his brothers, I am Yosef, is my father still alive? His brothers could not answer him for they were shocked at his presence." (Bereishis 45:3)

When Yosef revealed himself to his brothers he said the words, "I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" Rabbeinu Bachya notes the importance of Yosef's opening question. He comments that Yosef's worry for his father, even after not seeing him for many years, shows the connection between the two. It also shows the prevalence of Yosef's worry for his father's health. The Sforno reflects that this wasn't a question of *if* he was alive, as Rabbeinu Bachya says, since Yosef already knew that Yaakov was alive, rather he was asking about Yaakov's mental state. The question is as such, "After years of mourning me, how is my father doing?" Yosef cared about his father beyond just the physical sense, he wanted to make sure that he was doing well mentally as well, to know that the father he had left and grown close to was the father that he would be returning to. Whichever way we understand this question, it shows us how important and long lasting a strong relationship could be. After years of Yosef not seeing his father, he is still the first concern on Yosef's mind. We should all take a page out of Yosef's book and take time to think about those close to us, especially in these hard times, making sure that they are okay both physically and mentally, and taking time to value those who value us.

with Leah is because she had the most descendants.

However, the Ramban vehemently disagrees with the Ibn Ezra's rejection of Rashi. The Ramban writes that, even according to the Ibn Ezra's view that Yocheved must have been born much later, there would still be a miracle that is not mentioned by the Torah, as Levi would have had to be very old at the time of Yocheved's birth. This invalidates the Ibn Ezra's argument against Rashi. Instead, the Ramban utilizes the absence of any mention of miracles concerning the births of Yocheved or Moshe to illustrate a fundamental principle of the Torah: while openly miraculous miracles are mentioned, hidden miracles are omitted. Since Avraham and Sarah did not have any previous children before Yitzchak, his birth was

considered a *neis nigleh*, an open miracle. Alternatively, Yocheved had been able to give birth when she was younger, but only bore children at an old age because Hashem had delayed the birth of Moshe until the proper time came to take Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim. It was because of this that Yocheved's ability to give birth at such an old age was only a *neis nistar*, a hidden miracle.

One thing we can learn from the Ramban's fundamental difference between a *neis nistar* and a *neis nigleh* is that we must always remember that nature is a *neis nistar* in and of itself. By not mentioning when a *neis nistar* takes place, it is possible that the Torah is demonstrating that hidden miracles are inherent in nature. It is with this in mind

Yahrzeits & Insights: This Week in Jewish History

Rav Chaim Kreiswirth zt"l (1918 - 2001) - 16 Teves



This coming Thursday, the 16th of Teves, will mark the 23rd Yahrzeit of Rav Chaim Kreiswirth zt"l (1918 - 2001). Rav Kreiswirth was the long time Rosh Av Beis Din in Antwerp, Belgium, and the founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Merkaz HaTorah in Jerusalem. Already in his youth, Rav Chaim was renowned for his phenomenal brilliance, excellent character traits and geniality, and was dubbed the "Cracover Illui" at the young age of 15, in recognition of his prodigious powers of Talmudic analysis. Rabbi Kreiswirth studied for many years in the famous Torah centers of Poland and Lithuania. Upon application to the Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva, he was tested by the Rosh HaYeshiva, Rav Meir Shapiro. Rav Shapiro was duly impressed by Rabbi Kreiswirth's proficiency in all aspects of Torah. Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski as well as Rav Chanoch Henoch Eigis (both of Vilna) were very fond of him, and gave his sefer on Tractate Zevachim a warm approbation (the manuscript of which was lost during World War II).

As accomplished as Rav Kreiswirth was in the realm of Torah Scholarship, so was he proficient in the realm of *chesed* and *tzedakah*, particularly as it pertained to the plight of young widows and orphans. Many hundreds across the globe found tremendous financial support and relief thanks to the untiring efforts of the "The Antwerpen Rav", as he was admirably known. Rav Naftoli Jaeger shlit"l, currently the famed Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Shaar Yeshuv in Far Rockaway, New York, would take note of the incredible genius of Rav Kreiswirth, recalling how the latter would recite entire passages of the Maharsha's commentary by heart, word for word! Rav Jaeger recounted that in the mid-1990s, (which was known as the "dot-com age"), software and websites began to replace libraries and universities as the repositories of available knowledge. A New Age had dawned, where incomprehensibly vast information was now readily available to anyone, anywhere on the globe, with just the click of a button. *Bechasdei Hashem*, this phenomenon had become true of the world of Torah knowledge as well: virtually every area of Torah was now accessible to everyone, everywhere; with merely the click of a button. It was at this time, Rav Jaeger relates, that someone approached Rav Kreiswirth, and jokingly taunted him: "Oy, Antwerpener Rav! What purpose will the Rav now serve? You're out of a job! Your encyclopedic knowledge is of no benefit; your scholarly brilliance has been replaced by mere computers!" With characteristic wit, Rav Kreiswirth immediately responded:

"ניין ניין; וייל איך קען ארבעטן אויף שבת!!"

"There is still use for me; for I can still work on Shabbos! (when the use of computers is prohibited)"

But as was the Rav zt"l's practice, his words, even a seemingly mundane retort or witticism, were always supported or enhanced from somewhere in Tanach or Chazal; he seemed to have just the perfect source for every occasion. With a twinkle in his eye, Rav Kreiswirth thereupon spontaneously explained a cryptic passage found in the beginning of the fourth Perek of the Yerushalmi in Meseches Demai: The mishna there tells us that if one purchased produce from a person who is not trustworthy regarding tithes, and the buyer forgot to tithe the produce himself, he may ask the seller regarding the status of such produce, on Shabbos, and eat the produce based on the seller's confirmation; even though on a weekday, the seller's response would not suffice to permit consumption. The Yerushalmi explains why this is so:

"רבי ביבי בשם רבי חנינא אימת שבת עליה והוא אומר אמת."

"Rebbi Bibi in the name of Rebbi Hanina (said): The fear of the Shabbos is on him and he will speak the truth."

It seems from the Yerushalmi that even one who is less trustworthy is more readily trusted on Shabbos. For some reason, people are assumed to be more honest on Shabbos, "for the fear of Shabbos is upon them". Rav Kreiswirth brilliantly applied this concept to the modern contemporary world as we know it: A whole week long, anyone can assume the distinction of a scholar; as he can profess to possess great knowledge, provided he is armed with the benefit of some virtual encyclopedic software. However, on Shabbos, when no such device or phenomena is available to him, "The fear of the Shabbos is upon him and he will speak the truth"! (i.e., stripped of the benefit of technological libraries, the "fear of Shabbos" forces one to "speak the truth" and give up his façade of acquired knowledge, as he is now exposed to be of limited knowledge, without the use of technological advancements!)

It is noteworthy that Rav Chaim zt"l was niftar on 16 Teves; just a few hours after 15 Teves - his 83rd birthday.

יהי זכרו ברוך!

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that one should strive to have a greater appreciation for the seemingly mundane parts of life, as every tiny detail of one's life is constantly willed into existence by Hashem.

Famine, Finances, and Faithfulness

Yehuda Klavan ('26)

Toward the conclusion of *Parshas Vayigash*, the *passuk* says,

"וַיִּלְקֹט יוֹסֵף אֶת־כָּל־הַכֶּסֶף הַנִּמְצָא בְּאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם וּבְאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בְּשֶׁבֶר אֲשֶׁר־הֵם שְׂבָרִים וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף בֵּיתָה פַּרְעֹה:"

"Yosef collected all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan as payment for the rations that were being procured, and Yosef brought the money into Pharaoh's palace."

(בראשית מז:יד)

Through a simple reading of this *passuk*, there are many questions that stand out. We all know that Pharaoh put Yosef in charge of preparing for the upcoming years of famine, yet it seems extreme that Yosef was able to "collect all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt." The Egyptian citizens surely knew about the seven years of plentiful and seven years of famine that were about to happen, so why didn't they save up food? The Radak answers that the Egyptians did in fact save up, but their provisions only lasted two years before they had to start buying from Yosef. This fits with what the Torah says a few *pesukim* later in *passuk yud ches*, that the people approached Yosef in the second year to ask for food. Alternatively, Rabbenu Bachya answers that the Egyptians' supply lasted for five years, and when the later *passuk* references the "second year," it is referring to the second year after their food ran out.

Moving to the second half of the *passuk*, is it necessary for the Torah to specify that Yosef brought the money into Pharaoh's palace? The Ramban explains that the Torah goes out of its way to mention this in order to make known Yosef's faithfulness, in that he did not take any money for himself. This is despite the fact that, as the Radak mentions, Pharaoh did not supervise Yosef, nor request an accounting of the finances. It is this quality of Yosef that caused the Egyptians to trust and even come so far as to like him, despite his taking possession of their money and assets. This is as the Ramban concludes: "*Ki Hashem hu hamatzliach es yirei'av*"- "Hashem causes those who fear him to succeed."

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Parsha Puzzlers!

1. How many times in Tanach did two people "fall on each other's neck," i.e. cry on each other's shoulders?
2. Which ten brothers were all named in honor of one person?
3. Through Yosef's ingenuity and direction, the House of Pharaoh benefited financially, and yet there was no long term appreciation of all that Yosef did for the Egyptian economy. Where in *Parshas Vayigash* is there a hint to the punishment that would be imposed on Mitzrayim for this lack of appreciation?

Answers:

1. There are three such instances, all in *Sefer Bereishis*: 45:14), Yosef fell on Yaakov's neck (48:29), and Esav fell on Yaakov's neck (33:4).
2. Binyamin named his ten sons in honor of his older brother Yosef (Rashi on *Bereishis* 43:30)
3. The phrase "*beisa Pharaoh*" – "to the house of Pharaoh," is found only twice in the Torah. Once here in *Bereishis* (47:14), speaking about the vast amounts of money that ended up in the Egyptian treasury because of Yosef, and once by the plague of *arov*, that was later inflicted on the Egyptians prior to *Yetzi'as Mitzrayim*. The Baal Haturim explains that because the Egyptians showed no *hakaras hatov*, appreciation, for the goodness that Yosef brought to their country, they were punished through the plagues. he use of the same phrase "*beisa Pharaoh*" connects the two ideas.

These questions and answers were adapted from "Torah IQ: The Great Torah Riddle Book" with the permission of the author.

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