



Parshat HaShavuah

VAYIGASH

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ויגש

ה' טבת תשע"ב

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Ashreinu

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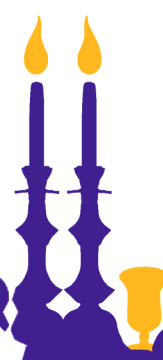
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Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

RABBI BEN SUGERMAN 1,4

JOSH GILINKSI ('15) 2

ARIEL HAAR ('13) 2-3

AMY GLAUN ('12) 3

TAMAR BUZAGLO ('09) 4

THE BATTLE FOR THE AGES

RABBI BEN SUGERMAN

Yeshiva University is unbelievably fortunate to have Rabbi Dovid Miller as their Mashgiach Ruchani in New York. Rabbi Miller has been involved in Jewish education since 1976, was appointed head of the Jerusalem yeshiva BMT in 1989, and has been the head of the YU Israel (Gruss) Kollel for over 25 years. He has now taken a leave to serve on the YU campus as Mashgiach Ruchani. Recently, Rabbi Miller spoke in reference to the schism between Yehuda and Yosef that has occupied 3 of the last 4 parshiyot of Bereishit. What follows is a

synopsis of his talk.. Most of it is drawn from the teachings of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook.

Leah and Rachel are our Matriarchs. We can take the 12 tribes and divide them along the lines of these two mothers, where Yehuda would be the leader of the Leah branch, and Yosef would be the leader of the Rachel branch. These two branches represent different philosophies of how to spread the message of monotheism throughout the world. Yosef believes that the world can be influenced, shaped, and molded from the inside out, and that one can enter into society and influence from within. The Navi says, "אפרים בעמים הוא". Yosef enters Egypt, takes command of Potiphar's household, and eventually becomes the second in command to all of Egypt. Yehuda is diametrically opposed to this approach. He believes that the sanctity of Israel is best preserved and most effective when separated from the world at large. This philosophy is evident from the fact that when Yaakov and his family go to live in Egypt, Yehuda prepares a community for the family in Goshen, separate from the greater Egyptian community.

Yehuda and his brothers see Yosef's ideology as a significant threat to the spiritual continuity of the Jewish people. They view Yosef as a "rodef," a pursuer (see the Seforno, 37:17). Shimon and Levi, who had already demonstrated a desire to protect the sanctity of the family with the incident of Dina, looked to kill Yosef prior to his sale. Fortunately, Yehuda came up with a brilliant suggestion and asked, "מה בצע כי נהרג את אחינו?" "What is to be gained by killing him?" Yehuda's idea was to put Yosef's ideology to the test. Rather than kill him, Yehuda suggested to send Yosef into exile to see whether it was possible to flourish spiritually while living in a debased society.

Fast forward a few hundred years. Upon conquering Eretz Yisrael, Bnei Yisrael will establish the Mishkan in the city of Shiloh, in the territory of Yosef. The Mishkan is contrasted with the בית המקדש, which will be in the territory of Yehuda. While when one would eat sacrifices in Shiloh, one could eat them wherever they were able to see the Mishkan, and would not have to be within the walls.

Conversely, the Temple in Jerusalem would be circumscribed by a wall, and accordingly, the consumption of a sacrifice would be confined within the wall. Each of these Temples took on the characteristics of its host. Yosef feels that exposure and visibility to the nations is the proper method, "בן פורת יוסף בן פורת" "בן פורת יוסף בן פורת" (49:22), while Yehuda believes that the insular and protective barrier is necessary.

Continued page 4





STAY TRUE TO WHO YOU ARE JOSH GILINKSI ('15)

The last pasuk in Parshat Vayigash states, “*Vayeshev Yisrael...b’eretz Goshen vaya’achazu bah,*” “And Israel settled...in the land of Goshen and took holdings in it.” Rashi explains the words “*vaya’achazu bah,*” “and took holdings in it,” to mean that the Jewish people settle comfortably in Goshen. Rashi explains that the Jewish people buy houses and estates and therefore establish landholdings in Goshen.

However, according to the Midrash, it is not the Jewish people who take hold of Goshen, but rather it is the land that “grasps” and possesses them. By living in a foreign land, the Jewish people are subject to negative influences.

The differences in opinion may be explained as follows. According to Rashi, on a literal and physical level, the Jewish people prosper in Egypt. They take hold of the land and are able to build homes and estates for themselves and their families. The Midrash, however, gives a deeper insight, and explains that on a spiritual level, the land of Egypt takes hold of the Jewish people. Thus, while the Jewish people appear, superficially, to be prospering in exile, on a spiritual level, their very presence in a non-Jewish land leads them away from Jewish values.

The solution to surviving in *galut* is studying Torah and keeping mitzvot. It is the fact that the Jews did not give up Torah and mitzvot in Mitzrayim that eventually leads to their redemption, and so too, today, although we prosper physically in *galut*, we must make sure to stay true to the Torah and the mitzvot so that we can prosper spiritually too.

CONCLUSIVE PROOF ARIEL HAAR ('13)

“...וירא את העגלות אשר שלח יוסף לשאת אתו ותחי רוח יעקב אביהם...” “...And [Yaakov] saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to transport him, then the spirit of their father Jacob was revived” (Genesis 45:27).

Yaakov finally allows himself to accept the news that his long-lost son Yosef is alive and that he is now the viceroy of Egypt once he sees some solid proof. Perhaps he is hesitant to accept the fantastic report because he thinks it is some kind of cruel hoax.

Yosef could have easily sent along all sorts of signs to prove that he is genuinely Yaakov’s son and not an imposter. He could have described his room, or any other intimate detail that would not be known to a stranger. But he does something seemingly different altogether. According to the Midrash, the “wagons Yosef sends to transport Yaakov to Egypt” hint to the *sugya* they had discussed in private on the last day they had seen each other, the topic of *Eglah Arufah*, the decapitated calf. This sign convinces Yaakov that this is not a hoax and revives his spirits.

But why is this, in fact, such a conclusive proof? An imposter could have easily discovered this intimate information about Yosef and his father.

During the time of the Vilna Gaon, a very strange incident took place in his city. A very young couple married and shortly afterward the husband vanished without a trace. The poor wife was left an *agunah*, a living widow, unable to remarry because her husband might still be alive.

Thirty years passed, and finally, one day, a man appeared on her doorsteps and declared, “My dear wife, I’m back!” Then he told her a long story about what had kept him from returning for so many years. The woman looked at the man and did not recognize him as her husband; but then again, she could not be sure that he was not. Thirty years changes a person. The man was about the same build and coloring as her husband. His features were similar. His face was weathered by time, and it was difficult to imagine how he might have looked like thirty years earlier.

Continued page 3





Haar continued

It was possible that this was her husband. And yet, he did not seem familiar. She expressed her reservations to the man, and he was very understanding. “Test me,” he begged. “Ask me any question about our life together. See if I know the answers.” She asked him questions, and he had all the correct answers. He knew all about their families, their wedding day, their home, including some intimate details that only the two of them could have known. Still, she remained suspicious and she decided to seek the advice of the *beit din*. The *dayanim* of the *beit din* interrogated the man extensively, but they could not catch him on a mistake. He was very convincing, and yet, his wife was not convinced. What was the *beit din* supposed to do?

They sought the counsel of the Vilna Gaon. “Take the man to the shul,” said the Gaon, “Ask him to point out his *makom kavuah*, the place where he normally sat.” They took him to the shul and asked him to point out his seat. The man hammered and hawed, but he was not able to do it. Then he broke down and admitted that he had learned all his information from the husband whom he had befriended many years earlier. The Vilna Gaon had put his finger on the flaw in this man’s diabolic plan. Assuming that the man was an imposter seeking to move in with another man’s wife, he was obviously far from a righteous person. Such a person would seek out all sorts of important details to “prove” his identity, but it would not occur to him to find out about the husband’s seat in shul or any of the other matters concerning Jewish life.

Similarly, Yaakov knows that if the man who claims to be Yosef is an imposter, he might extract all sorts of intimate and obscure information from the real Yosef. But he also knows that it would never occur to an imposter to ask which *sugya* he and Yaakov were discussing when they last saw each other. When Yosef is able to refer to the *sugya* of *Eglah Arufah*, Yaakov is convinced that he has found his long-lost son.

Serious Jews identify themselves through the holy aspect of their lives. The important information is not the make and color of their cars, not the size of their houses, and not the last time they went fishing or played basketball. It is the mitzvot they perform, the chesed that they do, the places where they sit in shul, and “the last *sugya* they discuss” that defines real Jews.

TRANSCENDING THE PHYSICAL

AMY GLAUN (‘12)

In this week’s parsha, we read about the amazing story of Yosef reuniting with his family after 22 years. Although Yosef has plenty of valid reasons to hate his brothers, he disregards them all. He just wants to be with his family and see his father. This on its own shows how incredible Yosef is. When Yaakov comes down to Egypt, Yosef takes him to meet Pharaoh. Pharaoh asks Yaakov, “How many are the days of the years of your life?” (Genesis 47:8). Yaakov answers, “The days of the years of my sojourns are one hundred thirty years. The days of the years of my life have been few and miserable, and they have not reached the days of the years of the lives of my forefathers” (Genesis 47:9). Rabbi Shlomo Dessler asks, what does this mean? Why does Yaakov not have simply responded by saying how old he was?

Rav Hirsch explains that Pharaoh is really asking Yaakov how many meaningful days he has had throughout his life. Yaakov answers by explaining to Pharaoh that he has lived 130 physical years, but those years have not all been spiritual, and in fact, he has not reached his goals yet, unlike his forefathers. Yaakov is on such a high level that he can look at his life and admit to what he has and has not done, both physically and spiritually. Yaakov, who is a spiritual person, explains to Pharaoh, who is a physical person, the importance of always looking for the spiritual aspects of life. This is an amazing act because Yaakov himself has struggled to reach his own goals. This is why he is one of our forefathers, because we can relate to these struggles.

Additionally, in this week’s parsha we learn from Yaakov the importance of transcending the physicality that we are surrounded by daily. There is so much pressure in today’s society to have “the car,” “the phone,” or “the top clothing brands,” but none of these things add any true meaning to our lives. Just like Yaakov struggles to reach his goals, we must do the same in order to find a way to connect with our spiritual side. Whether it may be through davening, holding the door open for someone, giving charity, or even just saying good morning to a friend, there is always a way to connect to one’s spiritual side in any situation. We must try to remember Yaakov’s humility on a daily basis as we aspire to follow in his ways.



“מדור לדור”

TORAH FROM OUR ALUMNI

A PERSON'S ROOTS

TAMAR BUZAGLO ('09)

In this week's parsha, Yosef finally reveals himself to his brothers, and sends for his father to come to Mitzrayim to live near him for the rest of his life. Yaakov, rejoicing over the news, agrees to Yosef's request. He and his family move to Mitzrayim to eventually settle in the land of Goshen.

Interestingly, on a similar note, in the haftorah, the navi Yechezkel is given a prophecy instructing him to write the names of Yosef and his children on one piece of wood, and those of Yehuda and his children on another piece of wood. He is told to then place the piece of wood with Yehuda's name inscribed on it above the wood with Yosef's name on it, and hold them in one hand to symbolize that day when Bnei Yisrael will reunite again under one kingdom of David. The obvious connection is that of Yehuda and Yosef reuniting in the parsha after many years apart, while similarly in the haftorah, their two staffs reunite. However, there is also a deeper connection.

According to a Midrash, when Yaakov and his family travel to Mitzrayim, Yaakov sends Yehuda to go ahead of them to set up a yeshiva, and designates Levi as the one to eventually lead it. But did we not learn that Yosef is the one who learned with his father for seventeen years? Why should *he* not be the one to run the yeshiva?

Rav Avigdor Nevenzahl explains that Yaakov knows that Yosef is more involved in the political aspects of leading the people than the religious aspects. Yaakov is afraid that this trait would pass on to his children and could possibly lead them away from Torah. Therefore, Yaakov does not want Yosef leading the yeshiva. Although this may seem a little harsh, we later see that Yaakov's prediction is right. Yosef's future descendants, Yerovam and Achav, turn out to be *rashaim*, wicked, and lead Bnei Yisrael to sin. Yehuda, on the other hand, is concerned about the spiritual strength of Bnei Yisrael. His descendants will later become the kings of Israel, and they are able to bring spirituality into leading the people. This is why Yehuda's piece of wood is placed over Yosef's piece. Yehuda is the stronger one and needs to guide Yosef to follow his example.

However, we still have another question. We now understand why Yehuda's piece needs to be over Yosef's piece, however, why wooden planks? Why would Hashem choose lowly wood to be the instrument, and not a stronger, more durable material to make more of an impression? The answer is once again found in the origins. Wood comes from trees, which represents family. Trees come from roots, which produce fruit, and the stronger the roots are, the stronger the tree is, and the sweeter the fruits. Parents, in this case the "roots," provide the tree, the child's upbringing. If the roots are strong and the tree is solid, then the fruit, the children, will be sweet. The use of wooden staffs is a reminder of how important a child's upbringing is to their own development and their future descendants'.

Rabbi Sugerman continued

The Mishna in Avot (4:20) states, "כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים סופה להתקיים", "Any debate that is for the sake of Heaven, (sincerely interested in advancing truth and G-d's greatness in this world), will sustain." The Mishna does not say that we will have a definitive winner to the debate, but that simply the debate with its two opposing sides will continue as each of the sides carry legitimacy. Until this day, we see this debate passionately being played out amongst the many segments of our brethren. Perhaps we could say that the debate between Yehuda and Yosef, motivated by a sincere desire to be מקדש שם שמים, will continue until ביאת גואל צדק.

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