

Parshas Vayigash

December 25-26, 2020

Teves 10-11, 5781

Vol. 1- Issue 11

G-d's Plan

This week's parsha is the link to the beginning of the exile.

After Yosef discovered his brother's and he planted a chalice in Binyamin's travel bag to hold up the caravan from leaving Egypt, thrusting his brother's into despair over the potential secondary loss of a child for Ya'akov.

The fact that Yehuda repeats the story in the beginning of the parsha- trying to show how Yosef was "wrong" (i.e., it was Yosef who asked the brothers to bring the youngest when all they wanted was a morsel of food) and deflect responsibility of the fact that Binyamin was in a potentially perilous position.

Right in the middle of the explanation, Yosef couldn't take it anymore, and the posuk tells us: וְלֹא-יָכֹל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנִּצְבִּים עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאוּ כָל-אִישׁ מֵעָלַי וְלֹא-עָמַד אִישׁ אִתּוֹ בְּהִתְנַדֵּעַ יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו:

Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone withdraw from me!" So there was no one else about when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-קֹלוֹ בְּבִכּוֹ וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּשְׁמַע בֵּית פַּרְעֹה:

His sobs were so loud that the Egyptians could hear, and so the news reached Pharaoh's palace.

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעוֹד אֲבִי הֲיִי וְלֹא-יָכֹל אֶחָיו לַעֲנוֹת אֹתוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלוּ מִפְּנָיו:

Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still well?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dumfounded were they on account of him.

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו גִּשּׁוּ-נָא אֵלַי וַיִּגָּשׁוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יוֹסֵף אֶחֱיֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר-מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי מִצְרַיִם:

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come forward to me." And when they came forward, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, he whom you sold into Egypt.

There are some important highlights. Yosef obviously needed his brothers in their entirety as a clan to come to him, so that the realization of his "prophetic dream" (the wheat bundles bowing to him, and the sun, moon and stars). Furthermore, he couldn't necessarily send for them, and reach out and say "Hey brother's remember the dream I had, well I am now the viceroy in Egypt", perhaps because they wouldn't come down in their entirety. Yosef had to endure years of isolation in Egypt to arise as the viceroy, and the brother's in their most vulnerable position had to arrive before Yosef, so they could have full submission as a subservient to the king.

Any other way, and the fulfillment of the prophetic dream couldn't have happened. This plays further into the theme guided by Ever's prophecy to Rivka that I keep touching upon as central to the culmination of the purpose of creation, which is to make Hashem a dwelling place in this abode, with the coming of Mashiach.

There are human players and controllers who take a stand to ensure the prophecies are fulfilled (e.g., Rivka pushing Ya'akov to get the blessing ahead of Esav) and show us

the importance of hishtadlus and human intervention into the mission of bringing along/expediting the prophecy. But there are players who cannot be involved lest they take counter steps toward the fulfillment. In this case, Yosef had to be bowed to by his brothers, they could only come to this through simple submission, not recognizing Yosef as the brother, or they may not have fully submitted.

As articulated in the following posukim.

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעוֹד אֲבִי חַי וְלֹא-יָדְלוּ
אֶחָיו לַעֲנֹת אֹתוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלוּ מִפָּנָיו:

Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still well?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dumfounded were they on account of him.

וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו גִּשְׁוֹנָא אֵלַי וַיִּגָּשׁוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי
יוֹסֵף אֶחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעוֹד אֲבִי חַי וְלֹא-יָדְלוּ

Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come forward to me.” And when they came forward, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, he whom you sold into Egypt.

The brothers were shocked, and when he called them, they came. They fully submitted. Rashi explains that the brothers were backing away, (Rashi explains here that it's because the brothers were backing away).

But now the brothers realized that the prophecies and covenants of Hashem are set in motion, and thus will begin the exile of the Jews. (My conjecture is that the brother's intentionally sold Yosef as part of the plan to set in motion the prophetic dreams of Yosef that were a part of the journey of the forefathers to come. We know

that the exile had to be Egyptian.) Yosef confirms this for us לְפָנֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר
לְשׁוֹם לְכֶם שְׂאֲרֵית בְּאֶרֶץ וְלִהְיוֹת לְכֶם לְפָלִיטָה
גְּדֹלָה:

God has sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival on earth, and to save your lives in an extraordinary deliverance.

Hashem- guised in the language of Teva-nature, put me here, to set into motion the plan, and “ensure your survival”. The fact that the nation at this point had to go down to Egypt has to happen.

Yosef reminds the brothers; this is all part of the plan- I was sent here by Hashem- per him reconciling for the brothers that their selling of him was divine and meant to be. In posuk 8 of chapter 45, Yosef calls himself the father of Pharaoh and the land- (a reference to Yosef's dreams).

Yosef then tells the brothers to hastily call for Ya'akov וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו וְאָמְרָתָם אֵלָיו כֹּה
אָמַר בְּנֵךְ יוֹסֵף שְׁמֵנִי אֱלֹהִים לְאֶדֹן לְכָל-מִצְרַיִם רְגֵה
אֵלַי אֶל-תַּעֲמֹד:

“Now, hurry back to my father and say to him: Thus, says your son Joseph, ‘God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me without delay.

And this mission is of divine will. And he tells them that Yosef will provide safety and comfort in the interim. Pharaoh aids in the care and sends chariots and food and treasures.

Ya'akov lost his divine presence due to the loss of Yosef. וַיִּדְבְּרוּ אֵלָיו אֶת-כָּל-דִּבְרֵי יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר
דִּבֶּר אֲלֵהֶם וַיֵּרָא אֶת-הַעֲגִלוֹת אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַח יוֹסֵף לְשֵׂאת
אֹתָם וַתְּהִי רוּחַ יִצְחָק אֲבִיהֶם:

But when they recounted all that Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the wagons

that Joseph had sent to transport him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

But once Yosef sent the sign of the Eglarufa (as Rashi explains), Ya'akov was revived of his divine presence, which arguably would offer him clarity on the trajectory that unraveled once Yosef was sold. This may have happened so that Ya'akov became like his father when Rivka Yitzchak to ensure Ya'akov appropriately received the blessings. Ya'akov was left in the dark the past years, so as not to intermingle with the trajectory that is Yosef being sold to Egypt (as Yosef says it is buy Hashem).

The Eglarufa is a fascinating sign that Yosef sent, and this is perhaps the reason why Yosef and Ya'akov were learning this passage at all.

The Eglarufa is an atonement process of a town that is supposed to have taken care of one of its own. In the event that a dead body is found in a field, the authorities would measure which town is closest and require the closest town to be responsible for not having cared for this person. Once the Eglarufa ceremony is enacted the town is "forgiven". This applies to Yosef and his brothers. The brothers are the "town" who it would seem didn't take responsibility for the lost body – that is historically they are seen as malicious and punishable for the sale of Yosef (as stated by the Roman ruler by the Asara Harugey Malchus which we read about on Yom Kippur). But the opposite, through sending the "eglarufa" sign Yosef was telling Ya'akov and the brothers that they are forgiven, their acts and planning was set in motion, and by divine providence (i.e., the language Yosef uses) all is copacetic- and once this sign is realized by Ya'akov the spirit of Hashem can rest within Ya'akov and Ya'akov will restart his clarity

about how the world needs to proceed at this point, that he is sure that the process of Yosef being in Egypt and a viceroy, is part of the prophecies, the young will rule the old.

There are two Mashiachs according to our tradition. Mashiach Ben Yosef is a predecessor to Mashiach Ben David who will prepare the world for Mashiach Ben David. This is perhaps modeled after what we see here, that is Yosef prepared the way for Ya'akov and his brothers to arrive and sets into motion the beginning of the exile so that the Jews could be redeemed and receive the Torah and be formalized as a nation (when Hachodesh Hazeh Lochem is read). Furthermore, according to the Ever prophecy that is as I believe Messianic, Yosef is a key player in the old will serve the young and is a model for what is to come in the Messianic era.

Good Shabbos!