

Vayechi

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May we do the right thing

In this week's parsha we see the culmination of the foundations set by the forefathers and foremothers for the future of the Jewish people.

The parsha begins recalling the life of Ya'akov. Rashi tells us that the parsha is closed (that is there is no white space between this parsha and the last one- Vayigash) due to the fact that 1) because Ya'akov passed away, 2) because the "eyes and hearts of the Jews were closed due to the suffering that would befall them through enslavement 3) Ya'akov wanted to reveal the messianic era to his sons, but he was barred from prophecy (as explained in Bereishis Rabba).

Firstly, one can ask, why out of mourning for Ya'akov the parsha is closed, whereas for the other deaths of fore parents, there is no such signal in the written parsha?

The answer I believe stems from the principals that I have elucidated beginning in Parshas Toldos, where Rivka (Ya'akov's mother) received the prophecy for the end of days. Every time I mention this theme, I back it up with evidence from the subsequent parshios or other places in our history that seem to indicate that the premise I set of the importance of the Ever prophecy in fact stands to reason. (Last week I mentioned Egla Arufa, and the connection to the Asara Harugey Malchus, and that Hashem was going to overturn the world for asking whether the punishment for R'Yishmael was warranted according to the

Roman ruler who claimed that no one had been punished for the sale of Yosef- The Malach Hashareish who met R'Yishmael in his quest for an answer said that the world would be overturned- this reaction seems inappropriate or harsh if in fact there is a punishment due for the sale of Yosef. My conjecture is that the sale of Yosef was necessary, and part of the plan to prepare the incoming nation to begin the slavery in the land of Egypt. As it was revealed to Avraham that it was necessary for the Jews to be exiled, prior to being redeemed as a nation to receive the Torah on Har Sinai.

Therefore, Rashi pointing out that the parsha is closed here due to Ya'akov losing his foresight into revealing to the brothers the end of time supports the premise that all along when Hashem gave prophecy or revealed an outcome of the future, it was important for the people of the time to have the hishtadlus of their role in enacting it and partial to this is the power vested in humans that our actions bring about the outcome, but also have the power of changing the outcome.

Perhaps if Ya'akov revealed the end of days to his sons, without allowing for the course of humanity to play itself out, the wrong influence and actions would be taken by people of the generation. What I mean is that if it was revealed what was to come, free choice and the power of human activity would be unduly influenced. This is supported by the fact that later in the parsha when Ya'akov was about to bless Ephraim and Menashe, he says "Mi Eileh" (Ber. 48:8), Rashi explains, how or why did Ya'akov not know (or at least question who the sons of Yosef were) when it states earlier (Ber. 48:1 as highlighted by Rashi) that the messenger to Yosef saying that Ya'akov was sick was Ephraim who would study Torah with Ya'akov.

The “Mi Eileh” rather is that Ya’akov saw in the future evil people will arise from Ephraim and Menashe and Ya’akov didn’t want to bless them. Which was inappropriate, and Yosef says, Bonai Heim, they are my kids, and worthy of a bracha, and Ya’akov cannot influence the future, rather, he must leave it open to the possibility that there is the power to change the outcome, and that power is vested in humans.

Similarly the theme of the younger will be served by the older reveals itself here, in that firstly, Yosef children who are younger (by virtue of his birth order and the older brother had children already) got blessings first (although Rashi clarifies this, due to the respect owed to Yosef, and that Yosef was a person who got things done- and was key to ensuring the safety of the Bnei Yisrael at that point in their journey down to Egypt- see last parsha- and due to his power of the dreams – again the same theme as the Ever prophecy- was he was a key figure in how Hashem planned for the events to occur).

Similarly, Ephraim and Menashe both got their birth order “mixed up by Ya’akov” with the crossing of his hands, in that Yosef lined them up in front of Ya’akov such that when Ya’akov would outstretch his hands to bless them, they would be appropriately matched that the right hand of Ya’akov would be on the older, yet, Ya’akov switched, and the posuk says “Sikel” (switch your hands) which Rashi explains the word “Sikel” is the same as “Sechel” meaning intelligently, that Ya’akov deliberately mixed his hands up. Arguably, because he imbued the power of the future generations with the blessing that the younger will be ruled by the older and that the outcome of history for the Jews is that (e.g. Chanuka- few powering over many etc. etc.) (Ephraim

and Menashe as pointed out by Tzvika in the Thursday night Shiur, that they tried to escape Egypt early and died along the way, for which Yechzkiel redeemed them.

Sanhedrin 92b Who were the dead whom Ezekiel resurrected? Rav said: they were the descendants of Ephraim who calculated the end and erred, as it is said: “The sons of Ephraim: Shutelah, his son Bered, his son Tahath, his son Eleadah, his son Zabad, his son Shutelah, also Ezer and Elead” (I Chron. 7:20-22), and they were killed by the men of Gath, born in the land, etc., and it is written (ibid., 22): “And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brothers came to comfort him.” (from <https://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng/pesah/bar.html>).

Meaning part of Ya’akov’s inhibition to bless the children is that Ya’akov knew even though they took matters into their own hands, (which is arguably what they were supposed to do like their great grandmother before them – and Ya’akov saw that their decision was the wrong one, and perhaps wanted to get involved...which he wasn’t supposed to do- much like he- ya’akov- lost his vision after ‘losing’ Yosef, and right at the beginning of this parsha, where he wanted to tell the sons the end of days.)

There is the plan which Hashem put into order, and which Hashem steered actively with prophecy, and known outcomes- e.g. that Hashem will bring Mashiach, all else is up to us to serve Hashem. Sometimes we do it properly sometimes there are ‘mistakes’ although Chabad Chassidus and the Rebbes often explain that the intentions were correct, but their methods were wrong.

May Hashem bless us with the foresight to do the right thing and through our action expedite the coming of Mashiach.