

Haftarah Weekly

Shabbat Vayigash – Yechezkel 37:15 – 37:28

Even though many people may know about the story of the 'Ten Lost Tribes', it is important to be reminded of it, to understand this week's Haftarah. After Shlomo Hamelech dies, R'chavam, his son, is appointed to lead the Jewish people. The Jewish people came to R'chavam to ask to lighten the heavy taxes that Shlomo had put on them. He came to the Zekainim and they told him to listen to the people and lower the taxes. But he refused to listen to their advice and went to the young officers. They told him that on the contrary the taxes should be raised. The people subsequently rebelled and the kingship was split between the north and the south. In the south, the tribes of Yehudah and Binyamin stayed loyal to R'chavam and Malchus Beis Dovid. Their capital city was still Yerushalayim. But the other ten tribes appointed Yerovom ben Nevat to rule over them in the north, with the capital city Shomron. The ten tribes were exiled first through Sanchariv Melech Ashur, and the tribes of Yehudah and Binyamin through Nevuchadnetzar Melech Bavel. Between these two exiles were 133 years. Yechezkel now prophesied the reunification of the ten tribes with

Yehudah and Binyamin in the Mashiach era. The ten tribes are referred to as the tribe of Ephraim as he is considered the leader of the ten tribes as Yerovom ben Nevat came from Ephraim.

Yechezkel, in this week's Haftarah, symbolically holds two pieces of wood together. One piece of wood represented the ten tribes and the second block of wood represented the tribes of Yehudah and Binyamin. This promises that at the time of the Mashiach the Jewish people will be once again united. The Prophet Yechezkel predicts that Bnai Yisrael will live securely in Eretz Yisrael forever, with the "return" of the shechina, Hashem's presence, to their midst.

This Haftarah fits in very well with this week's parsha as the brothers are finally reunited with Yoseph. According to the Maharal (Gur Aryeh, Breishis 45:14), the tears, when Yosef embraced Binyamin, were tears of joy because the brothers foresaw this prophecy of Yechezkel. Yosef being the father of Ephraim, with Binyamin who stayed loyal to Malchus beis Dovid. May this prophecy come speedily!

Special notice:

The Living Torah online has now been updated with all issues since the beginning of this year. Please take your time to browse through past issues.

The weekly email has now been fully activated and starting from parshas Mikeitz, subscribers will receive copies of the Living Torah weekly.

We would like to thank you for your patience.

You can pick up your copy of the Living Torah in school, online or by email.

Visit hasmonean.co.uk/livingtorah, where you can view all past issues online or sign up for the weekly email.

Email us at:
livingtorah@hasmonean.co.uk

Editorial Team: Adam Gaventa
Rafi Katten
Shimon Levy

Technical Editor: Jonny Fishel

Contributors: Mr. J Bokor
Yehoshua Lefkowitz

Under the direction of: Rabbi D Meyer



What was Ya'akov's Fear?

ויאמר אנכי הקל אלקי אביך אל תירא מרדה מצרימה כי לגוי גדול אשימך שם: אנכי ארד עמך מצרימה ואנכי אעלך גם עלה ויוסף ישית ידו על עיניך

(46:3)(46:4)

And he said, "I am your G-d - G-d of your father. Have no fear of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall surely bring you up; and Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes.

Yaakov was afraid. But afraid of what? This simple question has many answers. The Chizkuni answers that it was the upcoming exile that scared him, for he knew (from the Bris Bein Habesarim) (Bereishis 15:13) that his going down to Egypt would start it. Another answer is found in Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, where it is explained how Yaakov feared going down to a land of people who do not fear G-d. The Beis HaLevi differs and explains how Yaakov's fear was not of going down into exile, for he also knew from the Bris Bein Habesarim that the Jewish people would come out stronger, or going down to a land where the people were not G-d – fearing, for the same reason. Rather, it was the fact that it was Egypt, the lowest country in the world spiritually, that he would be going down to that scared him. The prospects of the Jewish people leaving Egypt were not so favourable.

Rashi, however, gives a totally different interpretation – 'Because he was distressed that he was forced to go abroad' (Rashi 46:3). It was the fact that Yaakov was leaving Eretz Yisroel, not going to Egypt, which pained him and made him afraid. Why does Rashi differ from the other opinions in the nature of Yaakov's fear?

The answer, explained by the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt'l, is based upon the fact that the Torah only states

Yaakov was afraid after he had already begun his journey to Egypt, along with all his family and possessions, and had reached Be'er-Sheva. Be'er-Sheva is located on the southern border of the Land of Israel and so Rashi concluded that it was leaving Eretz Yisroel that led to Yaakov's fear. [It was the actuality of Yaakov leaving his home and the home of his family.]

However, the fact remains that this was not Yaakov's first journey outside of Eretz Yisroel – he had gone to Lavan's house and lived there, away from his homeland for 20 years, during which time he observed Torah and Mitzvos and built up a large, loyal family. Why was Yaakov afraid, then, that this would not be the case now when going down to Egypt, that the Bnei Yisroel could not do the same?

To answer, we must draw a distinction between the situation when Yaakov went to Lavan's house and our Parsha, where Yaakov leaves a second time. When going to Lavan's house, Yaakov went alone and the prospect of becoming a large nation did not seem so apparent. True, he did raise a family, but not a nation. Now, however, Yaakov already had a large family of seventy souls, so the prospect of developing a large populace was a reality. And this is Yaakov's fear and disappointment. He was afraid that now, he was leaving Eretz Yisroel, the place that would seem to be most fitting for the Jewish people to grow, and going down, he and his whole family, to Egypt, where it did not seem to be the best environment to do so in. Therefore, Hashem reassured him: "I will make you into a great nation there" – in Egypt.

Yehoshua Lefkowitz

Words of the Wise

Once the Chofetz Chaim was travelling through Poland and stayed the night at a Jewish-owned inn in a small town.

During the evening meal he noticed a heavily built middle-aged man stomp in out of the biting cold and sit down at a table by the window. He looked slightly embarrassed to be there, but cheered up when he was served a steaming-hot roast chicken, which he proceeded to wolf down, accompanied by a few glasses of strong ale.

The Chofetz Chaim observed him for a few moments, then asked the innkeeper about the man's background.

The innkeeper replied contemptibly. 'That man's a nobody,' he said, nodding in the burly man's direction. 'He's never opened a sefer in his life. He was captured by the Czar's troops when he was young and served in the army for 20 years. I'm amazed he even knows what kosher is, let alone keeps it!'

The Chofetz Chaim calmly walked over to the man and spoke to him. The man at first looked up angrily to see who was disturbing his meal but his

demeanour softened as he clearly recognised that a holy man was addressing him. He looked surprised as the Chofetz Chaim greeted him warmly, and shook his preferred hand.

The Chofetz Chaim spoke gently to him. 'I heard that you endured the terrible ordeal of being in the Czar's army. You must have been tormented by the rank and file, and I'm sure the officers attempted to 'coerce' you into converting. I am astounded that despite all that you are still careful to eat kosher.'

The Chofetz Chaim continued, 'If only my merits could equal that which you will receive for clinging so stubbornly to your roots in such a gale.'

The man leaned over and kissed the Chofetz Chaim's hand, tears in his eyes.

The Chofetz Chaim then urged the man to find a teacher who could teach him about Judaism. The man did so and eventually became a Talmid Chacham.

Adapted from Parsha Parables

Riddle of the Week

When is it possible that a person will receive a harsher punishment for committing a sin, which had he transgressed it to a greater degree, would have been punished with a lighter punishment?

Last week's riddle:

Where in the Torah do we find 6 words in a row all beginning with the letter "א"?

איש אל אחיו אבל אשמים אנהנו (בראשית מב:כא) In last week's sedrah!

M'lachah of the Week

Losh - Kneading

Losh, or kneading, is the penultimate M'lachah of the *S'dura D'pas*, the order of bread – the first eleven M'lachos. It is the act of forming a solid or semi-solid substance of particles using a liquid. There are two steps in this process: contact of the liquid with the flour, and the mixing of the two with a kneading action. The M'lachah of Losh was originally required for making the Lechem Hapanim (show bread) for the Mishkan and also for the mixture of the dyes for the garments. Due to this M'lachah, it is forbidden to pour water on flour even without any mixing. It is likewise prohibited for a second person to come along and mix the water and flour into dough, even though he did not add the water in the first place.

Application, the Key to your Potential

ויגש אליו יהודה

The Midrash Rabbah (93:4) quotes the following verse from Mishlei (20:5):

מים עמקים עצה בלב איש ואיש תבונה ידלנה

"Council in the heart of a man is like the deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out."

The first seventeen pesukim of this parsha contain Yehuda's pleading for the release of Binyomin. The result was to cause Yosef to break down into tears.

The Midrash tells us that once there was a well whose fine water was inaccessible due to the well's great depth. One person came along and tied thick ropes to one another and then thinner string to the ropes and finally threads to the string. By then he had assembled a cord long enough for a bucket to draw up the well's water.

So too, in the course of these seventeen pesukim, Yehuda pounded Yosef by recalling earlier conversations and finally, the potentially heartbreaking scenario of the brothers returning to Ya'akov without Binyomin. All of that eventually broke down Yosef's iron string exterior and laid his heart bare to accept Yehuda's plea for Binyomin's freedom.

The Midrash is helping us to appreciate Yehuda's strategy, which was to put forward an interconnected argument. Some parts of his speech were tougher than others, but altogether they reached Yosef's heart.

We were told by Rav Shlomo Brevda shlita that this Midrash was the first Midrash which his Mashgiach, Rav Yechezkel Loevenstein Z'tl heard when he went to Kelm Yeshiva. It was taught to the talmidim that in Kelm they also applied the lesson of this Midrash to each person.

Each person has a heart of potential, but one can only fulfil and maximise it through continued application. Intensity can vary (like the rope string or thread) but cannot be interrupted.

If we are to achieve:

ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך

to love your G-d with all your heart", then we have to apply ourselves to the goal increasingly.

By this means we will succeed in reaching our own hearts just as Yehuda reached Yosef's.

Written by Mr. J Bokor

Gematria of the Week

When Yosef reveals his true identity to his brothers, he says כי פי המדבר אליכם - that it is my mouth speaking to you. These seemingly superfluous words were in fact a sign to his father Ya'akov. The Gematria of the above phrase is the same as that of בעגלה ערופה. The last topic of Halochah that Yosef learnt with his father was ערופה. By including this phrase which hints to the learning that Yosef and Ya'akov parted with, Yosef was sending a clue to his father that he was indeed still alive.

(בראשית מה:יב) - Based on Ba'al Haturim