



Vayigash 5776

December 18, 2015

A Taste of Torah Carry On

By Rabbi Eli Mozes

Excitement filled the air. Yosef, after twenty-two years, had finally revealed his identity. Although the brothers initially feared his retribution, their fears were assuaged when Yosef explained to them that their selling him into slavery was really all part of Hashem's plan. Their exile to Egypt was Divinely pre-ordained, and now, instead of being dragged to Egypt in chains, they would come as royalty, the family of the viceroy. Furthermore, while they were in Canaan, they were living on a subsistence diet due to the famine, and now all of their physical needs would be generously provided. The brothers were sent back to Canaan to bring Yaakov and their families. They were sent with a procession of donkeys bearing all they would need for the trip and all of the delicacies which Egypt had to offer. Yosef also sent along wagons to bring everyone back.

The brothers rushed back to Egypt and excitedly told their father, "Yosef is still alive, and he is the ruler of all of Egypt." Yaakov's first reaction was shock; his heart stood still, but he couldn't bring himself to believe it. The brothers repeated the story in more detail and showed him the wagons; only then did he believe them, "and Yaakov's spirit came to life." (Genesis 45:27) There is much discussion among the commentators regarding the significance of the wagons, which appear to be the cause for Yaakov to believe his children and follow them down to Egypt.

The Chida (Rabbi Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai; 1724-1806) offers a novel explanation based on Midrashic sources. Before Yosef was sold into slavery, he saw his father tending a stand of cedar trees. He asked Yaakov, "Father, what are these?" Yaakov replied, "Know, my son, that my grandchildren will erect a *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) for Hashem in the desert with these cedars, and they will transport them with wagons." Based on this, the Chida

explains that Yosef sent the wagons to transport the cedar trees.

When Yaakov saw the wagons, it verified that this truly was Yosef and, even more, that Yosef remained committed to his life's mission of bringing awareness of Hashem to this world. This also explains why, on his way down to Egypt, Yaakov took a detour to Be'er Sheva, as this was the location of the cedars (see Genesis 22:33).

Rabbi Shlomo Wallach applies this to the well-known concept that just as the Divine Presence rested in the *Mishkan*, so, too, every Jew can create a *Mishkan* within himself. But building a *Mishkan* within oneself is no small task; where does your average Yankel get the spiritual tools for this tremendous construction project? The answer is that just as the cedar building blocks for the *Mishkan* in the desert were planted for us by our forefathers, so too, the spiritual energy to create this edifice within ourselves is handed down to us from our forefathers; it is "planted" in our spiritual DNA. But then we must ask ourselves, if this energy is a national and personal heritage of every Jew, deeply embedded in our souls, then what is there left for us to do? The answer is that we just need to bring the wagons. When Yaakov's family descended to Egypt, they brought down these cedars on wagons, and when the Jewish People left Egypt 210 years later, they loaded these trees back onto the wagons and took them along. So, too, one cannot just assume that the spiritual heritage of "the Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov" (Deuteronomy 33:4) and will continue on its own accord. Rather, we must make sure to receive it from our parents, firmly fasten it onto our "wagons," and, in due time, pass it on very carefully to our children, so that their lives, too, will embody the will of Hashem.

Stories For The Soul

Never Give Up

Rabbi Fischel Schachter tells the story of a woman, a Holocaust survivor, who settled in America after the war and was married for twelve years without having children. One day she was sitting in a doctor's office on Madison Ave. in Manhattan, and the doctor, going over her charts, said to her, "Madame, please listen to me. I am saying this for your own benefit - give up. Medically speaking, there is nothing we can do so you can have children. Hair will grow on my palm before you have children!"

The woman left and despondently boarded the bus. During the ride, she contemplated her life. She alone, from her entire family, had survived the horrors of the war. She had arrived in America, desperate to begin a family. And now, after twelve long years, her hopes were shattered.

"I have no reason to get off this bus," she said to herself. And so she stayed on the bus, sitting there the rest of the day. At day's end, the driver told her she had to get off the bus; the poor woman just sat there, depressed.

"Listen, lady," the driver said, "I've had a hard day. I don't know what your problem is, but you're not going to solve it by staying on this bus."

She got off the bus and said, "Master of the world, You were with me all along. You saved my life countless times. You brought me here. You let me start my life over, and so it is in Your hands. I have no right to give up. The bus driver is absolutely right - You didn't save my life for me to live on the bus. Please tell me what to do. I won't give up. I will continue serving You no matter what."

A year later, she had a child. That child grew up, got married, and has his own grandchildren. By the time this woman passed away, she had enough great-grandchildren for a full head of hair to grow on the doctor's palm.

Rabbi Fischel Schachter added that he heard this story firsthand from the woman herself, whom he knew quite well. She was his mother.

Yaakov Avinu lived through numerous difficulties and tragedies during his lifetime, including the apparent death of his beloved son Yosef. But he did not change in his dedication to G-d one iota. Ultimately, he lived to see his son Yosef again, now viceroy of Egypt, still steadfast in his faith.

Kollel Happenings

FAMILY FUN AT JEWISH FAMILY EXTRAVAGANZA ON DEC. 25TH

Join the Kollel for family fun at the annual Jewish Children's Extravaganza on Friday, Dec. 25th, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event will be held at South Suburban Family Sports Center, 6901 S. Peoria. Cost: \$15. Admission includes unlimited rides. Visit www.mazeltot.org to find out how to get free or discounted tickets until 12/23. For general information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org.

ISSUES OF CLONING AND CLONES AT JAN. 6 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Marc Cooper, President, Cooper Developmnet and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they delve into the ethical issues of cloning. January 6, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

WINTER GARDENS WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT JAN. 12

The Kollel Women's Division is excited to announce that its 4th annual Women's Wellness Workshop will be held on Jan. 12, 2016. *Winter Gardens Women's Night Out* will feature bestselling author and keynote speaker Debra Fine, *Sense-ational: An Exhilarating Experience Engaging Each of the Five Senses*, great food and camaraderie, and other delights to help you achieve health in mind, body and soul. For more info, contact info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: On *Rosh Chodesh Teves*, which two halachic controversies are avoided due to the fact that it's also Chanukah?

A: 1) A blessing is recited on Hallel; on other *Rosh Chodesh* days there is a halachic debate whether a blessing is recited on half-Hallel. The Ashkenazic custom is to recite a blessing; the Sefardic custom is to refrain from doing so.

2) During the Torah reading of *Rosh Chodesh* (when it occurs on a weekday), part of the reading is repeated, in order

to accommodate the four *Rosh Chodesh aliyos*. There is a halachic discussion whether to repeat (in Bamidbar Ch. 28) verse 3 or verses 6-8. (See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 423:2 and Mishna Berurah 423:3). On Chanukah, however, due to the extra Chanukah verses, there is no need to repeat any verses.

This week's question: Which verse is read from the Torah with the most frequency?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rashi - Part II

Rashi was born in Troyes, France in the year 1040. There are two stories passed down through the generations surrounding his birth. The first story relates that Rashi's father, Reb Yitzchak, had in his possession a very large and valuable diamond. The local bishop wanted to purchase the diamond for a large sum of money; he planned on using it to adorn a religious object in his church. Reb Yitzchak was horrified at the notion of his jewel being used for idolatrous purposes, but he realized that the bishop, a powerful figure, would force him to hand it over. Reb Yitzchak threw the jewel into the sea rather than allow it to fall into the hands of the bishop, and conjured up a tale about the unfortunate loss of the jewel for the disappointed bishop. As a reward, Reb Yitzchak and his wife merited a much greater jewel, their son Shlomo, who would light up the world with his Torah.

The second story tells that Rashi's mother, while pregnant with him, was

once walking down a narrow alleyway when a French knight suddenly appeared on his horse, racing down the street. As the horse was about to trample her, she leaned back against a wall, and the wall miraculously receded, allowing her to escape a horrible fate. It is said that one can still see an indent on a wall in Troyes, where the incident is said to have occurred.

Tradition states that Rashi was a scion of the House of King David. Rashi's uncle - his mother's brother - was Rabbi Shimon HaZaken (the Elder), a prominent rabbi and disciple of Rabbeinu Gershom Me'or Hagolah. (see Rashi Shabbos 85b s.v. *b'notah shura*)

Some say that Rashi was born on the day of Rabbeinu Gershom's death, in consonance with the Talmudic dictum that as one great Torah leader passes from this world, another is born to take his place (see Kiddushin 72b).

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