



Parshas Vayigash

December 25, 2020

A Taste of Torah

Travel Advisory

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Messages should be short and to the point. Which is why the message Yosef orders his brothers to relay to his father Yaakov is a head-scratcher.

Yosef, having revealed his true identity to his brothers, instructs them, word-for-word, what to tell Yaakov. “So says your son Yosef: G-d has made me master of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not delay. You will reside in the Land of Goshen and you will be near me - you, your sons, your grandchildren, your flock and your cattle, and all that is yours. And I will provide for you there - for there will be five more years of famine - so you do not become destitute, you, your household, and all that is yours.” (Vayigash 45:9-12)

Why does Yosef say to come down “to me” - this seems unnecessary and somewhat presumptuous. Why must he tell him now already that he will live in the Land of Goshen? Why the focus that “I will provide for you there” instead of a mere assurance that he will be taken care of? Why does Yosef twice say that not just Yaakov, but also all of his offspring and possessions, will be cared for? Is it not obvious that they are included in Yosef’s guarantee to his father?

Rashi tells us that Yaakov was hesitant to go to leave Eretz Yisrael. However, Hashem appeared to Yaakov and assured him that He would be with him in Egypt (see Vayigash 26:3 and Rashi ad. loc.). Rabbi Moshe Alshich (1508-1593) expands upon this idea and points out that Yaakov had long been concerned that Hashem be the One to provide for him, without going through a seemingly independent entity. When Yaakov had fled Eisav’s murderous wrath and headed to Charan decades earlier, the Torah tells us that Yaakov had prayed to Hashem that He provide him with “bread to eat and clothing to wear.” (Bereishis 28:20) This request is not merely for food and clothing, but that Hashem Himself be the one who would provide Yaakov with his needs.

This idea is supported by the conclusion of this request (ibid.:21), “...and Hashem

will be a G-d to me.” That is, Hashem Himself would directly care for Yaakov, without Hashem’s blessing coming through a secondary source. Indeed, throughout Yaakov’s years of exile in Charan at the house of Lavan, he miraculously survived and thrived despite the many challenges and difficulties he encountered, and Hashem’s direct involvement in his well-being and success was clear.

Exile is not just about being away from home in a strange land. It is about being under the dominion of another nation, and being provided for through the host nation. Yaakov, having lived his entire life under the direct care of Hashem Himself, did not want that reality to change in Egypt as the exile began. The Medrash states that in truth, Yaakov should have been dragged down to Egypt in iron chains, but Hashem had mercy and pulled Yaakov to Egypt “with cords of love.” This Medrash is also based upon the aforementioned idea; instead of Yaakov being subjugated to the direct control of a foreign nation, Hashem gently led him into Egypt without ever letting go of him.

Yosef, says the Alshich, wanted to put Yaakov at ease and assure him that he would not be under the control of anyone besides Hashem Himself. And so, Yosef stressed, “G-d has made me master of all Egypt,” to indicate that it is Hashem Who is running the show, and Yosef is simply serving as Hashem’s conduit for blessing. Yosef told Yaakov “come down to me;” Yaakov is not descending to Egypt to subject himself to Pharaoh, but, rather, to Yosef, who completely submitted himself before Hashem. Anything coming from Yosef is really coming straight from Hashem Himself, with Yosef serving as the pipeline. Yosef therefore also said that “I will provide for you there.” Yaakov’s needs would not come from the arrogant Pharaoh, but from Yosef, the conduit of Hashem’s direct kindness. This may also explain why Yosef mentioned Yaakov’s offspring and

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Stories for the Soul

An Old Story

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Gunzberg (1695-1785), better known by the title of his magnum opus, *Sha’agas Aryeh*, was seventy years old upon his appointment as rabbi of Metz. He noticed, upon his arrival, that many of the townspeople were disappointed at his advanced age; they had hoped for a young, energetic rabbi to lead them.

The first Shabbos after Rabbi Aryeh Leib’s arrival was Parashas Vayigash, and at his Shabbos *derasha* (talk) and addressed this very topic:

When Yaakov arrived in Egypt, Pharaoh asked him “How old are you?” Yaakov replied, “The days of my life are one hundred and thirty, they have been few, hard and difficult years, these days of my life, and they have not reached the days of the lives of my forefathers.”

Why did Pharaoh ask Yaakov about his age? And why did Yaakov give such a lengthy answer? He should have simply answered that he was one hundred and thirty years old!

Our Sages tell us that as soon as Yaakov arrived in Egypt, the land was blessed and the hunger and famine ceased. Pharaoh worried that Yaakov was very old and would soon pass away, and that would spell an end to the blessings.

Yaakov realized this, so he answered Pharaoh that indeed, he was one hundred and thirty years old. But, said Yaakov, these years were few, since they did not reach the days of his forefathers, who lived to ripe old ages of 175-180 years. Yaakov also explained that he looked much older due to the difficult life he had lived.

“The same is true for me,” concluded Rabbi Aryeh Leib. “I am not as old as I look. I have been subjected to

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Kollel Happenings

TORAH FOR TYCOONS VIA ZOOM ON JANUARY 6

Torah for Tycoons resumes on Wed., Jan. 6 via Zoom. **Please note time change for this class, 8-9 pm.** Join Tuvia Harbater, Triage Analyst at Intellisecure, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, for Hack Job: The Ethics of Hacking. Visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org for more info.

KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: What type of food could have a different *bracha* depending on the local culture?

Answer: Bread-type foods with a filling that are used as a meal item in some cultures and in others more as a snack. As discussed in a previous article, filled bread is considered *pas haba'a bikisnin*. However, some authorities (Taz Orach Chaim 168:6) rule that if the bread is filled with a savory filling such as meat or cheese and is used as a meal item, the proper *bracha* is *hamotzi*. Others (Magen Avraham *ibid.*:16; Shulchan Aruch Harav *ibid.*:10) make no

such distinction and rule that it remains *mezonos* when not actually eaten as a meal. The Mishna Berura (*ibid.*:94) rules that one should recite *hamotzi*.

Pizza is a classic example of this debate. In certain times and places, it is regarded as a snack food, while in others, a meal food. If one eats a single slice of pizza - which is generally regarded as a snack, not a meal - the above debate is relevant.

This week's question: What type of food could have a different *bracha* depending on its shape?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Saadia Gaon - Part IX

Rav Saadia stepped into the breach and communicated with Rabbi Aharon ben Meir, pointing out where his calculations had gone awry. At the request of Dovid ben Zakkai proceeded to write a work, *Sefer*

Hamo'adim (The Book of the Holidays), to explain the Babylonian position on the calendar and why Rabbi Aharon ben Meir's opinion was incorrect.

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possessions twice, once in the context of descending to Egypt, and once in the context of being provided for. It can be postulated that it was insufficient for just Yaakov to have this special connection with Hashem in Egypt. Nay, Yaakov, who knew of the bitter exile on the horizon, wanted the entirety of the Jewish People - all of his descendants, and all that they owned - to be under Hashem's direct jurisdiction. Yosef therefore told Yaakov that in all matters, that unique relationship would exist with Yaakov as well as the entirety of the Jewish Nation.

Yosef further promised that Yaakov would live in the Land of Goshen. Pirkei diRebbi Eliezer (Ch. 26) teaches that many years earlier, when Pharaoh had abducted Sarah, only to be forced by Hashem to return her to Avraham, Pharaoh had given the city of Goshen to Sarah as a gift. While unclear what actual control this gave the nascent

Jewish Nation over that area, on a spiritual level this meant that Sarah had imbued a special sanctity in that land. By living in Goshen, Yaakov was not fully under the spiritual control of the Egyptians, and he was able to maintain a strong connection to his forebears and to the sanctity imbued by his grandmother Sarah into Goshen.

Having lived most of their existence under the control of other nations, the Jewish People are quite familiar with being under the control of others. Hashem guarantees that He is with us at all times, but, alas, more often than not we are unable to maintain Yaakov's level of connection to Hashem and to merit actually experiencing Hashem's direct oversight while we are in exile. However, the knowledge that Hashem is, indeed, with us ought to spur us to find Him "watching through the windows, peering through the cracks" (Song of Songs 2:9) at all times.

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trials and tribulations during my life that have caused me to age prematurely. G-d willing, I shall serve as your rabbi for at

least twenty years."

And so it was - Rabbi Aryeh Leib passed away twenty years later, at the age of 90!