

PARSHAS

Vayechi

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Yitzchak Yiranen

Rosh Yeshiva Torah

The Power of Torah | A Shiur by Rav Baruch Simon
Compiled by Aryeh Kaminetsky, Y.C. '19

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There is an odd *medrash* that states that Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi lived in *Tzippori* for seventeen years. Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi would say that these years were similar to the seventeen years Yaakov spent in *Mitzrayim*. What is the significance of this comparison? Rav Moshe Wolfson writes that in many ways Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi was a rekindled spirit of Yaakov Avinu. He says that *nasi* (*nun-shin-yud-aleph*) is an acronym for *neschama shel Yaakov Avinu*. Rav Pinchas Menachem Justman explains that during the seventeen years Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi was in *Tzippori* he compiled the Mishna, the *magnum opus* of the Tanaim and the first great work of the era of *Torah Sheba'al Peh*. This paralleled and expanded upon the seventeen years of Yaakov in *Mitzrayim* in which he accomplished a great deal in *Torah Shebichtav*.

Rav Wolfson writes that Yaakov's time in *Mitzrayim* was marked by a prodigious amount of Torah study. He says that this explains why *Parshas Vayechi* begins "closed" and without the traditional blank space which separates the *parshios* in the Torah. The words "*Vayechi Yaakov*" are written in the place where the Torah is supposed to be blank, an allusion to the future when Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi will write down *Torah Sheba'al Peh*, which was supposed to remain oral and never be written.

"Yaakov uniquely embodied the learning of Torah, so he was worried his learning would be disturbed by living in *Mitzrayim*."

Rav Moshe Bick writes that this idea explains the language of the *passuk* which says "*Vayechi Yaakov*" as opposed to "*Vayeshev Yaakov*." Yaakov had been afraid to go down to *Mitzrayim* even though Avraham had gone, and Yitzchak had wanted to go. Yaakov uniquely embodied the learning of Torah, so he was worried his learning would be disturbed by living in *Mitzrayim*. Hashem reassured him that unlike *avodah*—embodied by Yitzchak who was forced to remain in *Eretz Yisroel*—Torah could be learned everywhere, even *Mitzrayim*. The *Gemara* in *Menachos* (110a) quotes a *passuk* in Malachi (1:11), "And in every place offerings are presented to My name." The *Gemara* says that obviously *korbanos* are only offered in the *Beis Hamikdash* and the *passuk* refers to the Torah which is learned everywhere.

Rambam in *Hilchos Rotzeach V'Shmiros Nefesh* (7:1) says that if a *talmid* goes to an *Ir Miklat*, we send his Rebbe with him because a person without Torah is considered dead. When Yaakov went to *Mitzrayim* he no longer had access to *avodah*, so he turned to Torah study. Therefore, only in *Mitzrayim*, when animated by the restorative power of Torah, is Yaakov considered to have lived. Torah can transcend geography and invigorate Jews even when they find themselves in *Mitzrayim*. Rav Bick quotes a *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (145b), "In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom" (Yeshaya 27:6). Rav Yosef taught: These are the Torah scholars in Babylonia, who add buds and blossoms to the Torah." Rav Bick says that the *Talmud Bavli* was a product of exile, written by Jews who, like Yaakov, had nothing besides Torah. Therefore, they produced the work which we study to this day.

As we find ourselves in *galus*, we should take comfort knowing we always have the Torah. We should strengthen our commitment to the live-sustaining force of the Torah, as it says "She is a tree of life to those who grasp her" (Mishlei 3:18).



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A Nice Vort

Respecting Yourself

Written by Sam Jaron, Syms '21

In *Parshas Vayechi*, we encounter the *brachos* that Yaakov gives to all of his sons while on his deathbed. Much is written about all of the *brachos*, but the *bracha* of Yosef is particularly interesting. Yosef's blessing is a sort of buildup to the blessings for Ephraim and Menashe and it reveals a deep message about how to go about our own personal *avodas Hashem*.

Yaakov opens his *bracha* to Yosef by saying, "The G-d in whose ways my fathers Avraham and Yitzchak walked..." (Bereishis 48:15). Netziv, commenting on this verse, focuses in on the idea of the forefathers walking in the ways of Hashem and gives two explanations. The first states that this verse represents a king and his elders while the other explanation says that it represents a shepherd and his flock. While these explanations paint two different pictures, the Netziv explains that they are not in disagreement and serve to complement each other. The king and his elders shows how the forefathers increased the *kavod* of Hashem just as elders do for a king, while the shepherd and flock represent how Hashem supported and provided everything for the forefathers. Netziv closes by saying that these two ideas are both shown through the *pshat* of the verse and he provides an interesting window into how we should conduct our own lives.

The order in which these two messages were related provides for us a model for our own *avodas Hashem*. First, we are told that the forefathers are representative of the elders of the king in that the elders provide *kavod* to the king. What this means for us is that first and foremost, all of our actions should be *leshem Shamayim*. One should never perform a *mitzvah* in order to advance their own personal status. Rather, they should act with the sole intention of revealing Hashem's glory in this world. Once we start acting with proper intentions, we become the second model; the shepherd and the flock. By revealing Hashem's glory in this world we open ourselves up to receive sustenance and support from Hashem. Through understanding why we do what we do and who we do it for, we obtain the ability to see the presence of Hashem in our own lives. Once we fully recognize Hashem in our lives, we are able to see the blessings which Hashem sends down to us every day.

Major Machloksim in the Parsha

Written by Avi Weschler, RIETS

Why did Yaakov not want to be buried in Egypt?

- **Rashi:** Yaakov was worried about three things. Firstly, he did not want his body to be covered in lice when the plague of *kinim* struck. Secondly, he did not want to go through the pain of rolling in the dirt to *Eretz Yisroel* when the dead are reanimated when *Mashiach* arrives. Thirdly, he did not want to be worshiped as a deity, something that was common for Egyptians to do for the dead they considered to be great.
- **Rabbeinu Bahya:** There were two separate parts to Yaakov's request: not to be buried in Egypt, and to be buried in *Eretz Yisroel*. This way even if Yosef could not get him to *Eretz Yisroel*, he could ensure he was not buried in Egypt. The two parts of this oath tell us that Yaakov had separate motives for not wanting to be buried in Egypt and specifically wanting to be buried in *Eretz Yisroel*. Rabbeinu Bahya explains that he did not want to be buried in Egypt for the singular reason of possibly becoming a deity. In contrast, he specifically wanted to be buried in *Eretz Yisroel* because the nature of the land helps the dead atone for their sins and because those buried there will be among the first to be reanimated in the times of *Mashiach*.

After Yosef swears to bury Yaakov in *Eretz Yisroel*, why does Yaakov bow? Furthermore, how can a father bow to a son?

- **Rashi:** "When a fox has his time, one bows to him" (47:31). Mizrachi explains that Yaakov was not interested in showing respect to the position his son held, rather, he had an ulterior motive. He acknowledged that the completion of his burial wish was completely reliant upon the actions of his son and he therefore needed to bow to express that reliance. The idea behind the phrase is that even a fox – which is usually a useless creature – deserves gratitude when it has a role, however small, to play.
- **Nachalas Yaakov:** Such a reason for bowing makes it seem like Yaakov did not trust his son. This cannot be true since Yosef already swore an oath to bury his father in *Eretz Yisroel*. How could Yaakov suspect that his son would not follow through?! Instead, it must be that Yaakov intended to show respect to the position and was making a point about proper etiquette.

Foursquare

In the very beginning of *Parshas Vayechi* the *passuk* states "and Israel (Yaakov) bowed towards the head of the bed" (Bereishis 47:31). What exactly is this teaching us? Rashi tells us that "towards the head of the bed" means that Yaakov was extremely appreciative that his bed was whole. "Bed" here is a reference to his children. Rashi points out that it was amazing that none of Yaakov's sons had turned wicked. Yaakov led by example and this impacted his children. Yaakov's perseverance was recognizable in Yosef and his commitment to the truth was seen in Yehudah (from his admission that Tamar was right). All his sons picked up from Yaakov's great *middos*. Yaakov showed that in life our actions could have a much bigger impact than our words.

Jonah Ganchrow, Y.C. '21

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When Yaakov blesses Ephraim and Menashe, he adds that future generations will bless their children to be like Ephraim and Menashe. The question raised by the *meforshim* is why specifically Ephraim and Menashe - what did they have over the other *shevatim*? Rav Shmuel Hominer, in his *sefer Eved Hamelech*, answers that Ephraim and Menashe grew up in the environment of *Mitzrayim*, surrounded by *tumah*, and yet remained righteous. The other *shevatim* grew up under the positive influence of Yaakov and didn't face the same tests Ephraim and Menashe did. When we bless our children, we are praying that they be like Ephraim and Menashe in their ability to overcome the *tumah* that surrounds them so that they could be true *ovdei Hashem*.

Eitan Schneier, Syms '21

Yosef tells his brothers that, "You shall bring my bones up out of here" (Bereishis 50:25). The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 13b) asks what did Yosef do to deserve being referred to as "bones" in his lifetime? The *Gemara* answers that Yosef should have protested his brothers reference to Yaakov as "your servant, our father" (Bereishis 44:31). What does Yosef's lack of *kavod* for his father have to do with being referred to as bones? Maharsha explains, based on the *Gemara* in *Nidah* 31a, that the child receives his bones from the father (as opposed to his mother or Hashem). The reference to Yosef as bones in his lifetime reflects this lack of *kavod* he had shown for his father. We must always show respect to our parents for all they have given us!

Yosef Bram, Syms '21

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Sefer Bereishis ends off with the placing of Yosef in a coffin, to which we all respond "*Chazak, chazak, v'nischazek*." What "strength" comes from this *passuk*? Some suggest that Yosef being "placed in the coffin," assured that Yosef would not desert *Bnei Yisrael* during their *galus*. Yosef wanted to be with *Bnei Yisrael* physically every step of the way, even if it meant being buried in Egypt for the time being. Perhaps another explanation is that this serves as a reminder for *Bnei Yisrael* that this world is just a pit stop. Eventually, everyone will pass on to the next world. Even when we are in exile and it seems tough to properly serve Hashem, we must remember that this world is temporary and try to maximize our time here.

Leo Rubin, Syms '21

Bottom Line Halacha

Parshas HaTamid

Written by Netanel Muskat, Syms '20

Rama in *Orach Chaim siman* 48 writes that one should recite the paragraph about the morning *tamid*. Is this an obligation or simply a nice thing to do? Rav Schachter quotes in the name of Rabbeinu Yona in *Brachos* that it is a biblical obligation. Shulchan Aruch Harav 47:10 assumes that men and woman are equal in this obligation. Therefore, even if one doesn't have time to recite all the *korbanos*, one should make an extra effort to say the paragraph relating to the *tamid*.

Now that we know that the recital of the *tamid* is an obligation, how must one fulfill this obligation? Many of the questions that we will deal with are dependent on how much we view the recital of the *tamid* as if we ourselves have offered it. When must the *tamid* be recited? Mishna Berura 1:17 writes that the *tamid* should be said during the day and some add that it's preferable to recite it before four hours into the day because this is when the *tamid* was normally offered. Must you recite the *tamid* while standing? Magen Avraham in *Orach Chaim* 48 says it should be recited standing because the offering had to be performed while standing. However, the common practice is to be lenient and permit sitting. Finally, some suggest that it's best to recite the *tamid* along with the congregation and in a synagogue because the offering was a congregational offering and was brought in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Sugya from the Parsha

Defining a Yissachar-Zevulun Relationship

Written by Ariel Axelrod, Syms. '19

In this week's *parshah*, we learn about the partnership between Yissachar and Zevulun. Zevulun would deal in business and support Yissachar who would sit and learn. What is the true nature of this economic spiritual relationship? If the Yissachar-Zevulun arrangement is a formal business agreement, is Yissachar considered Zevulun's partner in which they split all profits – Yissachar taking a percentage of Zevulun's monetary profits and Zevulun taking a percentage of the Yissachar's Torah *schar*? Or is Yissachar considered Zevulun's employee, a person hired by Zevulun to do a job? If this were the case, perhaps an even split of profits may not be required since a salary suffices for an employee. Alternatively, maybe Yissachar is no different than any Jew in need of *tzedakah*, charity, and Zevulun is no different than a benefactor.

On the other hand, perhaps the Yissachar-Zevulun arrangement isn't a formal business agreement and is more symbolic in nature. In this approach, Zevulun can be equated to anyone who enables a Jew to do a *mitzvah*. While Zevulun's enablement would not entitle him to *schar* of the mitzvah performance itself, his merit would be for encouraging Jews' fulfillment of Torah.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, in Igros Moshe (*Yorah Deah* IV:37), asserts that the arrangement was an equal partnership. Therefore, all profits – both monetary and Torah *schar* – would be split evenly between the two parties. The Rama (YD 246) holds that the relationship was formal and based on the future learning of Yissachar. Money was being exchanged for the expected economic value of an entity. The proverbial Zevulun supports his brother for a portion of his *schar* to be attained from Torah study, and the agreement is a formal stipulation.

If this relationship is a business partnership, can one acquire the *schar* for Torah learned in the past? The *Gemara* in *Sotah* (21a), discussing Yissachar-Zevulun type relationships, criticizes the partnership between Hillel and Shavna, which relied on Hillel paying for the Torah Shavna had already learned. Meanwhile, the *Gemara* sees no problem with the partnership between Shimon and his brother Azarya, which involved the exchange of the *schar* for Azarya's *future* Torah learning. Thus, the Rama above is consistent with the *Gemara* in *Sotah*.

Maharam Alshakar (Note 101) and Rav Hai Gaon (cited by Maharam Alshakar) suggest that the partnership is less formal and rather, more of a *segula*, without any real monetary exchange. Zevulun isn't receiving Yissachar's actual reward for Torah study, but does receive *schar* for enabling Torah study. However, one issue with this opinion is the *Gemara* in *Sotah*. Why does the *Gemara* distinguish between the 2 sets of partnerships, and how do we understand the timing of the *schar* being exchanged if there is no formal transaction?

According to Rav Moshe and the Rama, why is Torah different than a *mitzvah* like *lulav* which cannot be outsourced? One explanation is that Torah learning is unique. It is the highest-prioritized activity in Judaism, serving as our true source of life. Perhaps G-d, therefore, uniquely enabled those who don't have the time to be *koveya ittim* on a full-time basis a chance to partake in the *schar* achieved via its intensive study.

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