

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayigash

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Robbie and Brian Schwartz
in memory of Brian's father, Ephraim ben Noach z"l

The Message of the Wagons

Ezer Diana

After Yosef reveals his identity to his brothers, he instructs them to tell Yaakov about his success in Egypt, and to bring him down to Egypt. (Bereishit 45:13) However, when the brothers return to their father and share the wonderful news that his favoured son, Yosef, is still alive, he does not believe them. (45:26) Only upon his seeing the wagons that Yosef has sent does Yaakov finally acknowledge the good news. (45:27)

Rashi (ibid., based on Bereishit Rabbah 94:3) explains that Yaakov realized that Yosef was still alive since the last Torah discussion they had was about the *eglah arufah*, the heifer that has its neck broken (outlined in Devarim 21:1-9). When Yaakov saw the wagons, read as *agalah* in Hebrew, he remembered their conversation about the *eglah*, and realized that this was a special sign that must have come from Yosef. The Torah highlights this by emphasizing that Yaakov saw the wagons that Yosef had sent (Bereishit 45:27), even though Pharaoh was the one who had given the instruction to send wagons (ibid. 45:17-21).

The Da'at Zekeinim commentary (ibid.) questions this understanding. Although the words sound and are spelled somewhat similarly, this was not a written clue! It is quite unlikely that seeing wagons would then remind Yaakov of the calves that he had been discussing many years before.

While other commentaries attempt to defend Rashi in a variety of ways, such as to suggest that Yosef had young heifers pulling the wagons, the Da'at

Zekeinim commentary offers an alternative interpretation, suggesting that the Torah portion that Yaakov had been studying with Yosef was the princes' donations of wagons in honour of the inauguration of the altar (outlined in Bamidbar 7:1-10).

However, while studying about the *eglah arufah* seems relevant for the story (it emphasizes the importance of escorting others, which is exactly what was happening when Yaakov last saw Yosef), the suggestion that they were studying the princes' donations seems bizarre. Even if we accept that Yaakov was aware of what would happen in the future, why would he choose to discuss this seemingly unrelated story?

Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Goldberg suggests that Yaakov chose to teach Yosef about the gifts of the princes to present an important lesson. As we are told in Bereishit 37, Yaakov was aware of the tension between his children. He realized that there was a rift between his children, but that it would eventually heal. Therefore, as Yosef left to go meet his brothers, Yaakov reassured him that eventually, all of the tribes would be at peace with one another. To illustrate this, he taught him of the donations of the wagons that would be brought by the princes of each tribe. Although the princes brought various gifts, almost every single gift was offered in multiples of 12: There were 12 oxen (for pulling wagons), platters, bowls, ladles and ladles filled with incense. For *olah* offerings: 12 bulls, rams, one-year-old lambs and goats. For *shelamim* offerings: 24 bulls, and 60 rams, goats and one-year-old lambs.

Only one gift strictly required that the tribes join together in offering it – the six wagons which were offered for this occasion. Through this story, Yaakov illustrated to Yosef that there would come a time when all of the tribes would once again be reunited. When Yaakov saw that his other sons had returned with the news that they had reconciled with their brother, and he saw the wagons that symbolized that, then he truly knew that Yosef was alive and well.

As we complete our celebration of Chanukah and move towards the fast of the Tenth of Tevet, we cannot help but wonder about the tension between the different factions and groups of Jewish people that followed the Chanukah miracle and eventually led to the destruction of the Temple. Perhaps this is another reason to read about the dedications of the tribal leaders on Chanukah – it serves as yet another reminder that even in our darkest times, when it seems that the Jewish people are splintered apart, there is always light at the end of the tunnel. This Torah reading reminds us that although now we may feel distant from our brothers and sisters, it is only a matter of time until we reunite to once again inaugurate the Temple and Altar. May our efforts to repair our relationships of the past turn this coming week's fast day into a day of celebration.

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Summary

At the end of Chapter 8, Hashem told Shemuel to appoint a king. In Chapter 9, we are introduced to the king: Shaul ben Kish, of the tribe of Binyamin.

In truth, Yaakov's promise that "the sceptre will never leave Yehudah (Bereishit 49:10)" sounds as though our king must always be from the tribe of Yehudah. Commentators offer various approaches:

- Ramban (Bereishit ad loc.): Because the people requested a king improperly, G-d set up a temporary monarchy from Binyamin.
- Rabbeinu Nisim (Derashot haRan 7): Shaul was more worthy than anyone in Yehudah at this time.
- Abarbanel (Shemuel I 9:2): Yehudah was the lead tribe, but monarchy could come from any tribe until Hashem later promised it to King David and his descendants.

We meet Shaul as he and his aide search for his father's lost donkeys. After searching in multiple places across three days (9:20), and running out of food and money (9:7), Shaul finally suggests that they turn back - but only out of fear this his father would worry about them (9:5). Shaul is sensitive not only to his father's feelings, but to his servant's feelings; he

speaks of his father worrying about the servant's well-being, and he consults the servant respectfully regarding strategy. (9:5-10, and see Tosefta Berachot 4:18)

Shaul and his servant arrive in Shemuel's town, and seek Shemuel's counsel regarding the donkeys. (9:6-14) They offer an absurdly small gift to Shemuel for his help, either because this was standard practice (Malbim, Ralbag) or because they were unsophisticated and didn't know proper protocol. (Radak, Abarbanel)

Hashem has already told Shemuel that Shaul was coming; Shemuel informs Shaul that Hashem has set him as king. Shaul declines humbly, citing his family's lowly status. (9:15-21) At an ensuing feast, Shemuel demonstrates that all of this is from G-d; he had even set aside special food for Shaul, anticipating his arrival. (9:22-24, and see Avodah Zarah 25a) Shemuel and Shaul spend a long time in conversation; Shemuel may have been instructing Shaul in the service of G-d. (Rashi, Malbim)

On the next morning, Shemuel, Shaul and the servant set out to leave the city; the servant goes ahead, setting the stage for Shemuel to instruct

Shaul privately in the next chapter.

Insight

Shaul is introduced as having a father who is a *gibor chayil*, and being personally *bachur, tov*, and "higher than the entire nation, from the shoulders and up." (9:1-2) Some commentators render these as material descriptions - his father is a man of material wealth, and Shaul is young, of good appearance, and tall. Other render them as spiritual descriptions - his father is of great character, and Shaul is unique, of good character, and outstanding in his righteousness. (See Radak, Abarbanel, Malbim, Metzudat David and Yerushalmi Sotah 1:8)

Perhaps this ambiguity is the point. As seen in Chapter 8, the people wanted a king who would provide personal leadership, and Hashem desired a spiritual servant of G-d. (Derashot haRan 11) So Hashem chose a leader whom the people would see as their ideal king for his physical traits, but who actually possessed the spiritual traits that would enable him to be the ideal servant of G-d.

For more on Shaul's qualifications for leadership, see Shemot Rabbah 2:2-3.

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Holy Land Halachah: Tearing Upon Seeing the Ruins**Rabbi Alex Hecht****Rabbi Menasheh Klein, Mishneh Halachot 6:110**

The Shulchan Aruch rules that one who sees Jerusalem "in its [state of] destruction," and the Temple Mount, should tear his garment as a display of mourning. (Orach Chaim 561:2) The Shulchan Aruch qualifies that this is only required if more than thirty days have passed since one's last visit. (ibid. 561:5). Among many halachic authorities who deal with this issue, Rabbi Menasheh Klein notes that many people are not careful about this, and analyzes whether this is merely a result of people being overly concerned about their clothing, or if this practice has halachic justification.

Rabbi Klein notes that this practice was, similarly, not meticulously observed in previous generations. Rabbi David ben Shlomo ibn Zimri recorded that residents of 16th century Jerusalem were also not "careful" about this, and that Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai recorded that people in the 18th century were, similarly, not "accustomed" to tearing their garments upon seeing Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. (Radvaz and Birkei Yosef, cited in Shaarei Teshuvah 561) However, Rabbi Klein argues that Radvaz's comment, that people are not "careful" about this, does not necessarily indicate approval. In fact, it may be an expression of distress over laxity in observance.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Klein suggests that the widespread lenient practice may actually reflect adherence to the rationale of the law itself! The assumption behind the

mandate to tear one's garments upon seeing Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, is that one is constantly distressed over the Churban [destruction of the Temple], and that seeing these sites amplifies existing pain. One who lives in the midst of these sites becomes somewhat immune to this pain, obviating the need to tear one's garments constantly. However, when one leaves for more than thirty days, and returns, their pain will be renewed, and tearing of their garments will be warranted.

In our days, due to our long exile, most people have grown accustomed to an incomplete Jerusalem and the absence of the Beit haMikdash. Therefore, they are not constantly distressed over the Churban. Consequently, tearing their garments would not be an expression of magnified grief experienced by seeing these sites that our sages intended. To the contrary, a person will likely be more distressed over the destruction of his shirt than that of the Beit haMikdash, and might even be in violation of *bal tashchit* (the prohibition of destroying materials unnecessarily)!

Rabbi Klein adds that someone who can develop an appreciation of the absence of a fully built Jerusalem and Beit haMikdash should tear his garments, as the Shulchan Aruch rules. Rabbi Klein concludes with the guarantee that "all who mourn her destruction will see her comfort" with the coming of Mashiach, speedily and in our days! (Taanit 30b, based on Yeshayah 66:10)

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Biography

Rabbi Yekutiel Halberstam

Rabbi Dovid Zirkind

As one of the youngest Chassidic rebbeim of pre-war Europe, Rabbi Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam led thousands of Chassidim in Romania from the age of 22, beginning in 1927. The early years of his life were filled with extraordinary challenges, starting at the age of thirteen when his father passed away. He married at the age of 21 and immediately began to impact the non-observant community in western Romania, where Klausenberg is located. The extent of his success was such that the Jerusalem Rabbinical Court offered him a seat on their Beit Din in 1937. Uncertain as to whether he should accept the position, the Klausenberger Rebbe sought out the advice of his mother, who felt he was still too young to leave for Eretz Yisrael.

The second great tragedy of his life, shared with millions of Jews during World War II, was the murder of his family – his wife and eleven children – at the hands of the Nazis. They were gassed in the Auschwitz death camp, where he was also held, in June of 1944. Later that year, Rabbi Halberstam was assigned to a labour detail which searched the remains of the Warsaw Ghetto after the uprising there. From there the Rebbe was marched with six thousand others to the Dachau concentration camp. Only one-third survived that terrible march, the Rebbe among them. In the Fall of 1945, the Rebbe was instrumental in incorporating religious life in the DP camps. He created slaughter-houses, mikvaot and yeshivot that provided both physically and spiritually for his fellow survivors.

In 1947, the Rebbe remarried and moved to the United States, where his following grew. All the while, he continued to develop a community of Chassidim in Netanya, and he eventually made aliyah himself in 1960. Operating from there, he continued his involvement with the Williamsburg community until his death.

The Rebbe's great accomplishments later in life included founding the non-profit Laniado Hospital in 1976, and establishing the *Mifal haShas*, a worldwide project which encourages intensive Talmud study through exams and monetary incentives, in 1982. The latter program has been continued by his two sons, his elder son in Israel and his younger son in the United States, since his passing in 1994.

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Torah and Translation

The Joy of a Siyum

Rabbi Yekutiel Halberstam, Divrei Yatziv Orach Chaim 94

Translated by Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

במה ששאלתם בענין חלוקת הש"ס וסעודת סיום....

עכ"פ לענינו ברור מהקרבו העדה דמקרי חבורה של מצוה אפי' במצוה שיכול לקיים ביחיד, כיון שברבים מעלתה גדולה יותר, ושמחה של מצוה דרבים נשגבה מאד לעומת היחיד ודו"ק.

ובאמת זה הוא מענינים המסורים ללב, אם מרגיש שמחה בלב על גמרה של תורה וחדות ד' הוא מעוזו שזכה לסיים הש"ס או המסכתא ואפי' המשניות או אפי' מכ"ד ספרים, עיין פנ" ברכות דף י"ז ע"א ר"י כי הוה מסיים ספרא דאיוב וכו' דהיה רגיל לעשות סיום עיין שם, והיינו שלמדו בעיון רב ועומק הדברים להבין דברי תורה"ק וחכו"ל, ויגעתי ומצאתי תאמין שבאו לתוך תוכן דבריהם הקדושים והיו ששים ושמחים ונותנים שבח והודאה להשי"ת על שזכו לסיים הספר, והוי סעודת מצוה, משא"כ באם כל לימודו רק כמדלג על ההרים כדי לאכול בשר ולשתות יין או לאסיפת מעות ואינו שמח כלל בשמחה של מצוה, למה תהא זאת בגדר סעודת מצוה.

ומ"מ בתר רובא דעלמא אזלינן שמיגעים עצמם על המס' ושמחים שבס"ד הגיעו עד הלום וחדות המצוה ממלאה כל ישותם, ולזה סתמא דמילתא הוי סעודת מצוה, משא"כ בפרק וכדומה כשלומד בניקל דמזה אין לו השמחה של מצוה, בודאי לא הוי סעודת מצוה וזה ברור בס"ד.

With regards to that which you asked regarding dividing up Shas (tractates of the Mishnah or Talmud) and making a mitzvah meal...

For our purposes it is clear from the Korban HaEdah that it is called "a mitzvah collective" even with a mitzvah that could have been accomplished individually, for with the community its status is even greater, and the joy of a communal mitzvah is more rarified compared to that of an individual.

In truth, this is something that is given over to the heart. If one feels joy in his heart for having finished [a part of] Torah, and the rejoicing of G-d is his strength, that he was privileged to finish Shas or a tractate, even of mishnah, or one of the twenty four books [of Tanach], see the Pnei Yehoshua (Berachot 17a) regarding Rabbi Yochanan who when finishing the book of Iyov would regularly make a [celebration of] completion. [Therefore, one may celebrate such an accomplishment]. This is when they would study with much analysis and depth to understand the words of the holy Torah and the sages of blessed memory. People who can say, "I have toiled and found," can believe that they have come to the inner meaning of the holy words. They would be happy, rejoice, and give praise and thanks to the Holy One blessed be He that they were privileged to complete a book. This was a mitzvah meal. However, if one's study was just skipping over mountains to eat meat and drink wine, or to collect money, this is not at all the joy of a mitzvah, so why should this have the status of a mitzvah meal?!

In any case, [by default] we follow the majority of the world, who toil over the tractate and rejoice that, with the help of Heaven, they have reached this place, and the joy of the mitzvah fills their entire existence. And this, we may presume, is a mitzvah meal. However, this is not the case with a chapter and the like that can be studied easily, for in this [we presume by default that] there is not joy of a mitzvah, and definitely not a mitzvah meal. This is clear, with the help of Heaven.

In Shemot 20:23, Hashem instructed the Jews to build a ramp, rather than steps, leading on to the mizbeiach. As the Torah explains, the purpose is, “so as not to reveal your *ervah* upon it.” Certain sections of the human body are classified as *ervah* and are to be covered; taking broad steps on the altar, wearing a tunic, would cause those parts to be more exposed than usual. Sefer haChinuch lists this as the Torah’s 41st mitzvah, and adds that using a ramp encourages a more disciplined and less frivolous gait..

Sefer haChinuch contends that this mitzvah is truly about the gait, not the ramp; one who takes broad steps in ascending the ramp is in violation of the law. However, this

view runs afoul of a mishnah (Yoma 2:1) which reports that during an early historical period, kohanim raced up the ramp in competitions to determine who would perform which tasks. Some suggest that running was acceptable before the actual service on the mizbeiach, or that the kohanim were engaged in a form of racewalking. (Tosafot Yeshanim to Yoma 22a)

Oddly, Rambam writes in his Sefer haMitzvot (LT 80) that the issue is the gait of the kohanim, but in his Mishneh Torah (Hilchot Beit haBechirah 1:17) he writes that the problem would be in having physical steps. Some suggest he recanted his position from the Sefer haMitzvot. (Chiddushei haGriz to Yoma 22a)

Weekly Highlights: Jan. 4 – Jan. 10 / 7 Tevet – 13 Tevet

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Jan. 3-4				
Fri. pre-minchah	Ezer Diena	Parshah & Kugel	BAYT	TFBM
10:30 AM	R’ Alex Hecht	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	After Hashkamah
After minchah	Ezer Diena	The Fast Days of Tevet	The Conservatory	Party Room
After minchah	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. Jan. 5				
8:15 AM	R’ Eitan Aviner	Contemporary Halachah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
9:15 AM	Netanel Klein	Sending the Mother Bird	Adas Israel Hamilton	
9:15 AM	R’ Sammy Bergman	Chagigah/Chasidut/Chevra	Shaarei Shomayim	Teens
Tue. Jan. 7				
Fast of the 10th of Tevet				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Yeshayah Chap. 26	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim Chap. 7	129 Theodore Pl.	Men
Wed. Jan. 8				
6:00 AM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Succah	BAYT	WW Room 2, Men
7:30 PM	R’ Alex Hecht	Stories of the Talmud 1: Introduction to Aggadah	Shaarei Tefillah	New Series!
7:30 PM	R’ Sammy Bergman	Where Do Our Morals Come From?	Shaarei Shomayim	Ancient Texts, Modern Dilemmas
7:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Learn to Read Esther #4	BAYT Boardroom	12-part series
Thu. Jan. 9				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Book of Shemuel	49 Michael Ct.	Women
8:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Beitzah	ediena@torontotorah.com	
8:30 PM	R’ Sammy Bergman	Shabbat: Laws of Boreir	Shaarei Shomayim	Advanced
8:30 PM	R’ Jeff Turtel	Tzurba MeiRabbanan	Shomrai Shabbos	Men
Fri. Jan. 10				
10:30 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Bava Metzia: Perek 6	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim

10:00 AM Sunday, R’ Aaron Greenberg, Gemara Shabbat: Not this week
11:00 AM Sunday, Beit Midrash Rotation in Contemporary Halachah: Not this week
8:30 AM Wednesday, Ezer Diena, Mishlei
8:30 AM Friday, R’ Mordechai Torczyner, Parshah

Seder Boker for Men with Rabbi Moshe Yeres, at Yeshivat Or Chaim

10:00 AM to Noon, Mon/Wed Masechet Megilah, Orot haTeshuvah of Rav Kook, Chovot haLevavot
10:00 AM to Noon, Tue/Thu Parshanut on the Parshah, Sefer Shoftim, Pninei Halachah