

THE RIGHT SIZE PORTION

by Rabbi Label Lam

And they went up from Egypt, and they came to the land of Canaan to their father Yaakov. They told him, saying, "Yosef is still alive. He is the ruler of all the land of Egypt." His heart stood still. He could not believe them. They told him all the words of Yosef which he had spoken to them, and he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to carry him and then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived. (Breishis 45:25 - 27)

His heart stood still: His heart changed and he ceased believing them. His heart was not swayed by their words. (Rashi)

All of Yosef's words: Yosef gave them a sign - the subject that he was studying at the time he left Yaakov was the subject of "Agal Arufa" (About the neck of a calf)... This is alluded to by the wagons which are called "Agalot". (Rashi)

This little piece of hidden information revived Yaakov. Why did Yosef only hint to his father Yaakov by sending him a wagon? Why did he not tell him out right that he remembered well their last conversations in learning? We know that Yosef wanted his father to understand that even though he had been stuck deep in the heart of Egypt for so long he remained at Tzadik, a righteous individual.

By referring to the last subject they had discussed Yosef was signaling to his father that he had not lost that connection to Torah learning. Not only was he alive physically, as the ruler of Egypt, but he was spiritually intact as well. That's all great! Again, why would he only hint to the message by sending a wagon to carry him? Why not just tell him directly?

There is a story that's told about a preacher who when he stood up to address his flock discovered one lone congregant. Looking out at all the sparse attendance the preacher shrugged his shoulders and announced to the farmer, "I guess we'll have no speech today!"

The farmer responded by telling the preacher, "Pardon me for saying, sir, but if I went out into the field and found only one lonesome horse to feed, you think I wouldn't feed that horse!?" Inspired by the farmer's words the preacher let forth an hour long - fire and brimstone discourse just as if there were throngs jamming the room. When he was finished, the preacher looked up at the farmer with a deep feeling of satisfaction and in search of reaction. The farmer glared glibly and said again, "pardon me for saying Sir, but if I went out into the field and found only one lonesome horse to feed, you think I would give him the whole truck filled with hay?!"

The verse tells us, "Yosef provided for his father, and his brothers, and all of his father's household with bread, according to the needs of the children." Yosef was masterful at catering to each individual's needs in spite of the fact that he was responsible for feeding all of mankind, as Egypt had become the bread basket of the whole world. He arranged for his family during the time of the famine, in advance of their arrival to settle them in the land of Goshen. Yosef was a genius in dealing with each person, from the powerful Pharaoh to the poorest peasant.

Maybe Yosef was sending to his father, in addition to the notion that he had not forgotten his learning is that he had not lost his sensitivity to people and to Chochmah-wisdom. The sages say, "A hint is good enough to wise person." In a sense Yosef was winking to his father by offering a more subtle message. He was telling him that not only had he not lost what he had learned, but he had not lapsed how to learn and how to properly teach.

The Talmud says that a person should always teach in the most cogent fashion. Perhaps Yosef wanted to convey his with a proper sense of proportion- an economy of style that whether for physical needs or spiritual demands, in one package, he could deliver **the right size portion**.

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