

# VISIONS OF THE TEMPLES

*by Shlomo Katz*

**Hamaayan / The Torah Spring  
Edited by Shlomo Katz**

**Volume XII, Number 11  
5 Teves 5758  
January 3, 1998**

**Sponsored by:**

**The Rutstein family  
in memory of father and grandfather  
Nachman ben Asher Halevi a"h (Nathan Rutstein)**

**The Marwick family  
in memory of Samuel Sklaroff a"h**

## Vayigash

In this week's parashah, Yosef and his brothers are reunited after their long separation. The Torah tells us (45:14), "He [Yosef] fell on Binyamin's shoulders and cried, and Binyamin cried on his shoulder." Rashi explains that Yosef was crying over the two Temples which would stand in Yerushalayim, in Binyamin's territory, and would be destroyed. Binyamin, in turn, cried over the Tabernacle at Shiloh which would stand in Yosef's territory (before the Bet Hamikdash was built) until it, too, would be destroyed.

Why were these far-in-the-future events on the brothers' minds at this time? R' Yonason Sacks shlita

(a Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshivat Rabbenu Yitzchak Elchanan) explains as follows:

Chazal teach that the Bet Hamikdash was destroyed because of Jews' senseless hatred for one another. So, too, it was senseless hatred which resulted in Yosef's being sold as a slave. The reunion of Yosef and Binyamin should have been a joyous event, for the effects of the brothers' hatred had been undone, but Yosef and Binyamin saw prophetically that that hatred was destined to be rekindled. Therefore they cried.

Regarding the final redemption, we read (Yishayah 44:12), "I shall make your walls [of Yerushalayim] ka'dechod." What does "ka'dechod" mean? The gemara (Bava Batra 75a) records two opinions - either it is shoham/onyx or it is yashfeh/jasper. When these views were expressed, the gemara continues, G-d declared, "Let it be both." [Ed. Note: In Aramaic, G-d's declaration is a play on the word "ka'dechod."]

R' Sacks observes: Shoham and yashfeh are the stones of Yosef and Binyamin, respectively, in the kohen gadol's breastplate. The ultimate redemption, the prophet tells us, also will feature a reunion of sorts of Yosef and Binyamin. (Torah Dimensions, Cassette No. 1001-4)

---

*"And I have not seen him since." (44:28)*

The phrase "I have not seen him" appears in one other place in the Torah - in the verse (Devarim 33:9), "The one who said of his father and mother, 'I have not seen him'; his brothers he did not know . . . for they have observed Your word and Your covenant they have preserved." What is the connection between that verse and ours?

R' Akiva Sofer z"l (20th century) explains that in the verse in Devarim, Moshe Rabbenu praises the tribe of Levi for its inborn attachment to Torah. Even a Levite who had never seen his mother and father and who did not know his other family members, inevitably grew up to be devoted to Torah.

The same thing was true of Yosef. Orphaned from his mother at age seven and separated from his father and brothers at age 17, he nevertheless grew up devoted to Torah. [Of course, Yaakov did not know this when he uttered the words, "I have not seen him," but perhaps the words were put into his mouth prophetically.] (Da'at Sofer)

---

**"Then you will have brought me in my old age to gehinom." (44:29)**

In the "olden-days," taught R' Yechezkel Levenstein z"l (mashgiach/dean of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Shanghai in the 1940's), people truly believed in the existence of gan eden and gehinom. Thus, as long as Yaakov thought that Yosef was dead, Yaakov had no doubt at all that he would descend to

gehinom. (This was because he believed that he had failed in his mission to create the twelve tribes of Israel.) Similarly, Yosef's intention in acting cruelly to his brothers was, according to Ramban, to lessen the punishment which they would receive at the hands of G-d. He had no question at all that G-d \_does\_ punish people for their sins and he therefore considered it to be in their best interests to suffer at Yosef's hands in this world.

Today, continued R' Levenstein, we have lost this faith. We ignore the fact that death is inevitable and every person will have to answer for his deeds. The gemara (Berachot 31a) relates that the sage Mar Zutra was once asked to sing at a wedding. He sang, "Woe to us that we will die," and apparently this was not considered inappropriate by the other guests. Imagine, in contrast, the uproar that would ensue if a rabbi were to give such a speech at a wedding today! (Mi'mizrach Hashemesh)

---

## An Astonishing Midrash

*"Let your anger not flare up at your servant, for you are like Pharaoh" (44:18) - just as Pharaoh is destined to drown in the sea, so you are destined to drown in the sea.*

R' Yehonatan Eyebchutz z"l (died 1764) explains as follows: The gemara (Nedarim 22) teaches that when one becomes angry, he forgets the Torah which he has learned. And, Pirkei Avot teaches that one who willfully forgets the Torah he has learned incurs the death penalty. It follows, therefore, that one who becomes angry incurs the death penalty.

What type of death is he liable for? The gemara teaches that whenever the Torah makes someone liable for the death penalty and does not specify how the penalty should be administered, it is through suffocation. Chazal also say that at a time when there is no sanhedrin and the death penalty is not administered, a person who is liable for suffocation will die by drowning.

Therefore Yehuda said, "Do not let your anger flare up, for if you do you will drown."

(Midrash Yehonatan)

---

R' Yitzchak Albaliah z"l born 1035 - died 1094

R' Yitzchak was born in Cordova and died in Granada (both in Spain). Legend has it that one of his ancestors, a Jew named Baruch, used to weave curtains for the Bet Hamikdash. When the Roman Emperor Titus destroyed the Temple in 68 C.E., the governor of Spain requested that a number of expert Jewish craftsmen be exiled to his province, and thus Baruch settled in the Spanish city of

Merida.

R' Yitzchak studied under the French scholar, R' Prigoras, and under the Spanish sage, R' Shmuel Hanaggid. On the 9th of Tevet 4826/1066, R' Yitzchak was visiting R' Shmuel's son, R' Yehosef Hanaggid, in Granada when the latter was savagely murdered by a mob of Arabs. R' Yitzchak himself escaped miraculously.

In 1069, King al-Mutamid of Seville appointed R' Yitzchak as his advisor and chief astrologer and as chief rabbi of his realm. In this capacity, R' Yitzchak was able to influence the king's treatment of the Jews. While holding these posts, R' Yitzchak also headed a yeshivah and wrote a Talmud commentary, now lost, titled Kupat Ha'rochlim. Several of R' Yitzchak's rulings are cited in the writings of Rambam and Ra'avad.

R' Yitzchak's son, R' Baruch, was a student of R' Yitzchak Alfasi ("Rif") and a dayan/rabbinical judge in Cordova. (Source: The Artscroll Rishonim pp.68-70; Sefer Hayuchasin)

---

Copyright © 1997 by [Shlomo Katz](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

---

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.

---