

FROM MITZRAYIM TO THE TEMPLE SERVICES

by Shlomo Katz

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Today's Learning:

Negaim 11:3-4

O.C. 152:1-153:2

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Menachot 96

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Yevamot 59

This parashah describes the Yaakov's final days and his burial. It then relates that, after Yaakov's death, his sons were afraid that Yosef would take revenge on them for selling him. The Torah relates that the brothers therefore said to Yosef (in Yaakov's name), "Anah / Please, kindly forgive the spiteful deed of your brothers and their sin, for they have done you evil . . ."

The midrash (Yalkut Shimoni) quotes Hashem: "Because you prayed using the word 'Anah,' the

Kohen Gadol will, in the future, enter the Holy of Holies and say, 'Anah Hashem'." Why?

R' Moshe Schwab z"l (1918-1979; Mashgiach of the Gateshead Yeshiva) explains that the above verse from our parashah represents the first time that Yosef's brothers recognized that they had sinned by selling Yosef. (Although in Parashat Miketz they had blamed their troubles with the Egyptian viceroy on their hardheartedness toward their brother's plea for mercy, they still believed that they were correct in selling him.) Thus, in the continuation of their plea to Yosef, the brothers refer to themselves as "the servants of your father's G-d," as if to say, "How did we succeed in recognizing our sin? Because we employed the Divine spark that is within us and raised ourselves above our prior level." (Yosef responded, "Am I in place of G-d?" - as if to say humbly, "I do not have a Divine spark equal to yours; I am but a tool in G-d's hands, and I could never harm you.")

When the Kohen Gadol entered the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur and pleaded for the Jewish people, he similarly said, "We have raised ourselves from our prior level and therefore recognize that we have sinned. Please respond by forgiving us." (Ma'arachei Lev IV p.159)

"For I will lie down with my fathers . . ." (47:30)

R' Zalman of Volozhin z"l (see page 4) taught that this brief statement - only three words in Hebrew - alludes to two fundamental beliefs of Judaism. First, by referring to his impending death as "lying down," as one lies down for a short nap, the patriarch Yaakov alluded to the eventual resurrection of the dead. Second, by saying that he would be with his fathers after his death, Yaakov alluded to the immortality of the soul, for if the soul did not live on, how would he be with his fathers?

R' Zalman added that this demonstrates the importance of reading every word of the Torah correctly. Since every word of the Torah is so pregnant with meaning, one loses so much if he does not read the words carefully.

(Toldot Adam, Ch.4)

"Then Yisrael prostrated himself towards the head of the bed." (47:31)

Rashi explains that Yaakov bowed to show his gratitude to G-d that Yosef had remained a tzaddik despite being a king and growing up in captivity among gentiles.

R' Shlomo Ganzfried z"l (died 1886; author of Kitzur Shulchan Aruch) asks: Why did Rashi mention the two events in Yosef's life out of order? In fact, first he grew up in captivity, and only afterwards he became [deputy] king!

R' Ganzfried explains that sometimes Hashem tests a person with poverty and sometimes He tests a person with wealth. Which is a greater test? Wealth is, because a poor person will by nature be humble. Therefore he is less likely to rebel against G-d.

Yosef was tested with both wealth and poverty. Because wealth is the greater test, Rashi mentions it first.

(Apiryon)

"He maneuvered his hands, for Menashe was the firstborn." (48:14)

This verse implies that the fact that Menashe was the firstborn was the reason that Yaakov crossed his hands and placed his right hand on Ephraim's head. In reality, however, the fact that Menashe was the firstborn was a reason why Yaakov should not have crossed his hands, observes R' Yisrael Isserlin z"l (died 1460; author of Terumat Ha'deshen). He offers two resolutions:

First, R' Yisrael writes in the name of his grandfather, "The chassid, R' Chaim, who was nicknamed Henschel of Heinbrucke, the son of our teacher, R' Yisrael of Krems who wrote glosses on the Rosh": The verse means, "Yaakov maneuvered his hands rather than embarrass Menashe by asking him to change places with Ephraim, for Menashe was the firstborn." [Note: R' Yisrael's reference to his great-grandfather and namesake is of historical interest because it is the source for our ascribing authorship of the important glosses on the Rosh to R' Yisrael of Krems. (Shem Hagedolim)]

Alternatively, we are taught that everything that happened to Yaakov had a parallel in Yosef's life. Yaakov decided to bless Yosef's son, Ephraim, as the first born just as Yaakov himself received the blessings of the firstborn. In this light, the verse can be understood literally: "He maneuvered his hands, for Menashe was the firstborn," and he did not wish to bless the firstborn.

(Beurei Mahary)

"Yaakov called for his sons and said, 'Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will happen to you in the End of Days'." (49:1)

Yet, in the verse that follow, Yaakov does not tell his sons what will happen to them in the "End of Days." Rather, he blesses them. Chazal explain that Yaakov wanted to reveal the "kaitz" / the time for the arrival of mashiach," but the Shechinah left him, so he changed the subject.

R' Yishayah of Tirani z"l (Italy; 13th century) asks: Why did Yaakov think that his sons were worthy of knowing about the End of Days? Because they were free of sin, i.e., among the names of the twelve sons of Yaakov, there is no letter "chet" or "tet." Thus, there was no "chet" / "sin" among them.

Hashem responded: There also is no letter "tzadi" or "kuf" among the names of Yaakov's twelve sons. Thus, there is no "kaitz" that can be revealed to them.

(Nimukei Chumash Le'Rabbeinu Yishayah)

"They came to Goren Ha'atad, which is across the Jordan, and there they held a very great and imposing eulogy. . ." (50:10)

What is meant by "a very great and imposing eulogy"? Rabbeinu Chananel z"l (Tunisia; 11th century) explains that there are nine different types of eulogy, and this eulogy for Yaakov encompassed all of them. (R' Chananel quotes verses in Tanach that illustrate the nine forms of eulogy.) There also were nine groups of people accompanying Yaakov's body to Eretz Yisrael, as we read in the preceding verses: "So (1) Yosef went up to bury his father, and with him went up (2) all of Pharaoh's servants, (3) the elders of his household, and (4) all the elders of the land of Egypt. And (5) all of Yosef's household -- (6) his brothers, and (7) his father's household . . . And he brought up with him both (8) chariots and (9) horsemen."

What should a eulogy include? R' Chananel says: A eulogy should describe the chessed and good deeds of the deceased, as in the verse (Shmuel II 1:23), "Shaul and Yehonatan, beloved and pleasant in their lives, and in their death not parted . . ." (See also the verses which follow there.)

A eulogy also should bemoan the manner in which the subject died, as in the verse (Shmuel II 3:33), "The king [David] lamented a dirge for Avner and said, 'Should Avner have died the death of a knave'." Also, a eulogy should describe all the goodness that the deceased and now has lost, as in the verse (Yechezkel 27:2-3), "Take up a lament for [the city of] Tyre . . . 'Your riches, and your wares, your merchandise, your rowers and your sailors . . . and all the men of war who are within you, and with your entire assembly that is in your midst, they will fall in the heart of the seas on the day of your downfall'."

(Perushei Rabbeinu Chananel Al Ha'Torah)

R' Yehuda Braver z"l

R' Yehuda Braver was born in 1891 in a suburb of Vilna. His father, R' Moshe Yitzchak, was a rabbi in several Lithuanian towns and, for the last 13 years of his life, in Cincinnati, Ohio. The younger R' Braver studied in the Telshe Yeshiva under R' Yosef Leib Bloch, in Volozhin under R' Raphael Shapiro, in Ponovezh under R' Yitzchak Yaakov Rabinowitz, and in Vilna under R' Chaim Ozer Grodzenski. In 1913, R' Braver received semichah from R' Shapiro. In that same year, he married and moved to the United States.

In America, R' Braver's first rabbinic position was in Akron, Ohio. There, he worked to strengthen kashrut supervision, he built a Talmud Torah building, and he established a branch of Mizrachi. (In 1922, he would be elected President of Mizrachi of Ohio.) He also raised thousands of dollars to support the settlement of Eretz Yisrael.

From 1923 to 1944, R' Braver was rabbi of the United Congregations of Kansas City, an organization

that included ten Orthodox synagogues in Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas. There, too, he strengthened kashrut and shechitah, and he built a modern mikveh that cost \$20,000 (in 1920's dollars). In 1935, he founded a yeshiva in Kansas City named Torat Moshe, after his father. The yeshiva attracted students from many communities, and R' Braver himself taught there four days a week in addition to bearing the yeshiva's financial burdens. He was a fierce fighter against movements that challenged Torah observance, and he called a convention of Orthodox rabbis in Des Moines, Iowa that led to the founding of the Council of Orthodox Rabbis of the Western States. R' Braver himself used to travel through the western United States checking on kashrut standards and the local mikvaot.

In 1944, R' Braver became Chief Rabbi of Mexico City, and he remained there for four years. In Mexico City, as in his previous positions, R' Braver strengthened kashrut and mikvaot. He also taught in that city's yeshiva, Etz Chaim. In 1948, R' Braver took a position in Los Angeles.

R' Braver authored a number of works which remained in manuscript after his death. These included She'eilot U'teshuvot Gur Aryeh Yehuda (halachic responsa) and Divrei Yehuda (sermons). (Toldot Anshei Shem p.12)

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