

YAAKOV AND HIS CHILDREN

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Parshas Shemos

Yaakov and His Children

Shmot

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Today's Learning:

Nedarim 11:4-5

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Ta'anit 5

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Shabbat 72

R' Samson Raphael Hirsch z"l introduces the Book of Shmot as follows: "With this second book, the history of the Jews as a nation starts. We are led out of the history of the individuals and families into that of the Nation by a list of those men [i.e., the twelve sons of Yaakov] who are already known to us as the 'main stem' of the Jewish People. It is out of these men, with their different individualities and characteristics, that the Jewish Nation developed. But there was one basic trait which they all had in common, and this formed the foundation of Jewish nationality: 'Each one with his household came with Yaakov' [Shmot 1:1].

"Later on, when the national body, dismembered by Pharaoh's mishandling, appeared to lie helplessly on the ground as a welcome feast for the vultures of history (as it had appeared in the prophetic vision of the ancestor [i.e., Avraham - see Bereishit 15:11]), and, at the call of G-d, was to arise 'in its blood' [Yechezkel 16:6 - i.e., through the mitzvah of milah] to immortal life, G-d began the building up of His people on the rock-like foundation of 'homes' - 'a lamb for a household' [Shmot 12:4 - i.e., the Korban Pesach] - on the bond of children to parents and parents to children. And here we are told that this foundation of the immortal People of G-d - even if it had been forcibly and violently crushed and disturbed [by Pharaoh, as described in this parashah and in various midrashim] at the time of the redemption - was implanted in them when the Children of Israel originally moved down into the Egyptian womb, out of which, through suffering and woe, they were to be born into a

nation." (Commentary on the Torah)

From the Parashah . . .

"And these are the names of the children of Yisrael who were coming to Egypt; with Yaakov . . ." (Shmot 1:1)

Why does the pasuk begin with "Yisrael" and continue with "Yaakov"? R' Yoel Herzog z"l (Paris, France; early 20th century; father of Israeli Chief Rabbi Yitzchak Halevi Herzog z"l) explains based on the similar wording in the verse in Parashat Vayigash which describes Yaakov's descent to Egypt. There we read (Bereishit 46:8), "Now these are the names of the children of Yisrael who were coming to Egypt -- Yaakov and his children." We also read there (verse 2): "G-d spoke to Yisrael in a night vision and He said, 'Yaakov, Yaakov'." Why the change from Yisrael to Yaakov?

The answer is that "Yisrael," the name given to our Patriarch after he defeated Esav's guardian angel, represents the fulfillment of Yitzchak's blessing that his son would rule over the other nations. When Yisrael/Yaakov was descending to Egypt, where his son was the viceroy to Pharaoh, our Patriarch and his children thought that he was going as "Yisrael." But Hashem appeared to him in a dream and informed him that this was not the case. Rather, Hashem told him, his journey was the beginning of the exile that had been foretold to Avraham. Therefore, He called the Patriarch "Yaakov."

Perhaps Yaakov did not immediately tell his children about his dream. Therefore, they continued to believe that they were going to Egypt as the "Children of Yisrael." However, they went not with Yisrael, but with Yaakov.

(Imrei Yoel)

From the Haftarah . . .

"Days are coming when Yaakov will take root, Yisrael will bud and blossom and fill the face of the earth like fruit. . . It will be on that day that Hashem shall thresh from the surging river to the Brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O Children of Israel. And it will be on that day that a great shofar will be blown, and those who are lost in the land of Assyria and those cast away in the land of Egypt will come, and they shall prostrate themselves to Hashem on the holy mountain in Yerushalayim." (27:6, 13)

R' Zvi Kalischer z"l (1795-1874; leader of the movement to resettle Eretz Yisrael in the mid-19th century) explained in an 1836 letter to Anselm Rothschild:

The ingathering of the Jewish exile will be gradual, "gathered up one by one" as one threshes wheat and the kernels emerge a little at a time. In the beginning, the redemption will consist of Yaakov taking root in the Land. Great plants also begin from one root. Next, "Yisrael will bud and blossom"

until eventually they will "fill the face of the earth like fruit." Only then will the "great shofar be blown" to redeem "those who are lost in the land of Assyria and those cast away in the land of Egypt."

"Therefore, so said Hashem, to the House of Yaakov, who redeemed Avraham, 'Yaakov will not be ashamed now, and let not his face now turn pale. For when he sees his children, My handiwork, in his midst, they sanctify My Name; and they sanctify the Holy One of Yaakov and render strength to the G-d of Yisrael.'" (Yishayah 29:22-23)

R' Yehuda Roseannes z"l (1657-1727; Turkey; author of Mishneh Le'melech on Rambam's Mishneh Torah) asks: What is the logical connection between the various parts of these verses? He explains:

There is some question about whether the Patriarchs - Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov - had the halachic status of Jews or Noachides. This caused a number of practical problems for them and was, in fact, the basis for the dispute between Yosef and his brothers. One practical problem was the following: Jews are commanded to give up their lives "al kiddush Hashem" / "for the sanctity of G-d's Name." Noachides have no parallel commandment. The question arises, therefore: was Avraham permitted to allow himself to be thrown into a furnace, as the midrash relates? May a Noachide give up his life "al kiddush Hashem" if he chooses?

One could argue that the fact that Hashem saved Avraham proves that Avraham behaved correctly. Indeed, maybe the fact that Hashem saved Avraham proves that Avraham was legally Jewish and was obligated to allow himself to be thrown into the furnace? Not necessarily, writes R' Roseannes. Perhaps Avraham was a Noachide and was not permitted to sacrifice his life. Still, says our verse, Avraham was saved so that he could produce a grandson Yaakov who would build the Jewish nation - "the House of Yaakov, who redeemed Avraham."

Interpreting the verse this way leads to another problem. How could Yaakov have married two sisters, which would later be prohibited by the Torah? If we say that the Patriarchs were Jewish, the answer is clear: Leah and Rachel each converted to Judaism, an act which legally severs all existing familial relationships. Halachically, Rachel and Leah would not have been sisters. However, if Yaakov was a Noachide, this would not be the case. In that case, although Yaakov would not have been prohibited from marrying two sisters (since he was not Jewish), it nevertheless would have been a source of shame since the Patriarchs attempted to observe the entire Torah. And, even after Rachel's death, seeing his children from Rachel would have caused Yaakov some shame.

The answer must be that Yaakov knew through prophecy that he needed to marry these two sisters [which was not technically prohibited to him]. But how can we be sure? The holiness and purity of Yaakov's children is a sure sign that they were not the product of forbidden relationships. Thus, say our verses: "Yaakov will not be ashamed now, and let not his face now turn pale. For when he sees his children, My handiwork, in his midst, they sanctify My Name; and they sanctify the Holy One of Yaakov and render strength to the G-d of Yisrael."

(Parashat Derachim)

Diaries

This week's excerpt from Ma'agal Tov, the diary of R' Chaim Yosef David Azulai z"l ("Chida"; 1724-1806), describing his travels as a "Shelucha D'rabbanan" ("Shadar" or "meshulach") on behalf of the Jewish community of Chevron, contains examples of two of the most significant aspects of his journal entries. The first is that, in his travels, Chida gathered a wealth of bibliographic information about books and manuscripts on Torah subjects, some of which have since been lost. The second is that he provides us with information about, or at least identifies, then-leading scholars and tzaddikim who are virtually unknown to us today. Much of the information that Chida gathered on his journeys later formed the basis for his biographical and bibliographical work Shem Ha'gedolim.

2 Adar I, Terumah [5516 / 1756]

Tuesday: At noon we journeyed from Turin [Italy] and arrived at Vercelli at dusk on Thursday. I was a guest in the home of those delightful brothers R' Yaakov and the Chacham R' Binyamin Segri, may G-d preserve them in life.

I preached there on [Shabbat] Parashat Terumah and on [Shabbat] Parashat Tetzaveh. They were extremely inclined to do kindness towards me. I saw there a copy of the Ohr Zarua in manuscript; Tzvi Mudah [a work opposing the 17th century false messiah Shabtai Zvi]; Kol Ramaz - much larger than the printed version; and the eulogy of the Ramaz [R' Moshe Zacut] over the author of Gidulei Terumah z"l; stories about Shabtai Zvi; and the [Asarah] Ma'amarot of Rama [R' Menachem Azariah] z"l in manuscript.

14 Adar I, [Ki] Tissa

Sunday: In the afternoon we set out from Vercelli and arrived in Casale di Monferranto the night of Monday. We had trouble at customs, but the Jews sent someone and brought us away in peace. I lodged with the gvir / noble person the Chacham Shimon Chaim Levi Morello, may G-d preserve him in life, and he wrought wondrous kindness with me as did all his household.

I preached there on [Shabbat Parashat Ki] Tissa, and I became extremely endeared of the local rabbi, the gvir, the wonder of our generation, Shabtai Elchanan Del Vecchio, may the Merciful One protect him and grant him life.

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Torah.org](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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