

SHABBAT SHALOM

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Vayigash

Shabbat Shalom

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Arline & Irving Katz and Robert & Hannah Klein, extending a "yasher koach" to Gordon Lederman for his help

We read in our parashah (45:1), "Yosef could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him, so he called out, 'Remove everyone from before me!' Thus no one remained with him when Yosef made himself known to his brothers." Midrash Tanchuma comments that Yosef behaved improperly, for he risked his life by remaining alone with his brothers, who did not yet know his identity. Nevertheless, Yosef found that risk preferable to shaming his brothers in front of the Egyptians when he identified himself.

R' Chaim ben Attar z"l (1696-1743) writes, citing the Zohar, that there are seven tzaddikim who parallel the seven days of the week. The tzaddik who parallels Shabbat is Yosef. Shabbat is associated with shalom / peace or harmony, as reflected in the greeting, "Shabbat Shalom," and the blessing, "Ha'porais sukkat shalom / He who spreads the shelter of peace over us . . ." (Ohr Ha'chaim to Vayikra 19:3)

What is the connection between Shabbat and shalom? R' Aryeh Finkel shlita (rosh yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva in Modi'in Ilit, Israel) explains: Our Sages say that Shabbat is the source of all blessing. And, the Mishnah (end of Tractate Uktzin) states: "Hashem found no vessel that could hold a blessing other than shalom." Thus, the blessing of Shabbat requires shalom.

R' Finkel continues: In light of the midrash quoted above, we can see how Yosef exemplifies the trait of shalom, preferring to risk his life rather than shame another person. In next week's parashah we

read, as well (50:21), how Yosef "comforted them and spoke to their hearts." Similarly, says the midrash, at the time of the Final Redemption, Hashem will console Yerushalayim and speak to her heart (see Yeshayah 40:1-2). (Yavo Shiloh)

"Yosef said to his brothers, 'I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?' But his brothers could not answer him because they were frightened before him." (45:3)

R' Shlomo Algazi z"l (1610-1677; Izmir, Turkey) asks: After Yehuda had been speaking at length about Yaakov's pain, why would Yosef ask, "Is my father still alive?" Also, why were Yosef's brothers unable to answer him?

We read later (45:27), "The spirit of their father Yaakov was revived (literally, 'came alive')." Rashi z"l explains this to mean that the Shechinah rested upon him. It was in this sense that Yosef was asking whether Yaakov was "alive." "My father was a prophet. Why didn't he know where I was all these years?"

Yosef's brothers were unable to answer this question, for they understood that their actions were the cause of Yaakov's losing his ruach ha'kodesh. (Shema Shlomo)

"I am the Kel -- Elokim of your father; have no fear of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there." (46:3)

Why would the information that he would become a great nation in Egypt console Yaakov? R' Yosef David Sinzheim z"l (1745-1812; Chief Rabbi of Strasbourg, France) explains: Yaakov was aware of Avraham's prophecy regarding a 400-year exile, and he feared that decree. Hashem responded: Do not fear! Your descendants' numbers will be so great that they will finish the work of 400 years in only 210 years, as actually happened. (Shlal David)

"Then Yisrael said to Yosef, 'Now I can die, after my having seen your face, because you are still alive'." (46:30)

R' Aharon Dovid Goldberg shlita (Rosh Ha'yeshiva of Telshe-Cleveland) asks: Earlier we read (45:27), "[Yaakov] saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him, and the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived." Rashi z"l explains that this verse alludes to the fact that Yosef had informed his brothers of the Torah subject he had been studying with Yaakov at the time he left him. If his spirit was revived then, what is the meaning of Yaakov's exclamation now?

R' Goldberg explains: Our Sages speak of the importance of seeing the face of one's teacher. For

example, in Eruvin (13b), Rabbi Yehuda Ha'nasi says, "The reason I am sharper than my friends is because I saw the back of Rabbi Meir. Had I seen his face, I would have been sharper still." R' Yitzchak of Volozhin z"l (1780-1848) explains (in his introduction to his father's work, Nefesh Ha'Chaim) that a person's words and deeds convey only his outermost thoughts, while his deeper thoughts are conveyed by the "glow" on his face. Thus, writes R' Goldberg, Yaakov was pleased when he saw from Yosef's deeds and heard from Yosef's words that Yosef remembered his learning. However, Yaakov could not know Yosef's deeper feelings until he saw him. (U'vacharta B'Chaim Al Nefesh Ha'Chaim p.7)

Elsewhere in the Torah . . .

When one says the Divine name "Elokim" while reciting a berachah, he should have in mind that it means, "Mighty and All-Powerful and Master of all powers." (Shulchan Aruch: O.C. 5:1)

What does it mean that G-d is "Master of all powers"? R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (1749-1821) explains:

When a human builder constructs a building out of wood, he does not create the wood or other raw materials; rather, he takes wood that was created previously and arranges it in his structure. When he is finished constructing the building, he departs the scene, yet the building remains standing behind him.

Not so G-d. With His unlimited powers, He created everything from nothing. (All the raw materials out of which His creations are made are also His creations.) And, since then, He re-creates everything at every moment of every day, meaning that the continued existence of all of Creation is dependent upon His continuous Will that it exist. In contrast to a human builder, if G-d would "depart" the scene, nothing of His "building" (the world) would continue to exist.

This, concludes R' Chaim, is the meaning of "Master of all powers," i.e., that no powers or forces can exist or endure independent of His Will. (Nefesh Ha'Chaim I ch.2)

R' Yisrael Elya Weintraub z"l (Brooklyn, N.Y. and Bnei Brak, Israel; 1932-2010) explains further: When man builds something out of wood, for example, he is not doing something that is contrary to the wood's nature. It is inherent in the wood's nature to submit to the forces that the builder applies to it. That is why the builder doesn't have to remain with the wood after his work is finished; the material was wood before and it is wood now; its essence is unchanged.

Not so when Hashem makes something. For example, when He split the Yam Suf and the water formed a wall, that was not something that is in water's nature to do. Thus, if G-d had not maintained the wall of water, it would have ceased to stand.

Similarly, none of Creation exists naturally. Therefore, if G-d would not maintain it continuously, it would cease to exist. It follows that He is "Master of all powers." Man appears to have powers, as do

angels, animals, and even plants. In reality, though, G-d continuously causes those powers to exist. Thus, He is the sole Master of all powers. (Yirat Chaim Al Nefesh Ha'Chaim)

Letters from Our Sages

This letter was written by R' Shimshon David Pinkus z"l (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel; died 2001) in response to a question by a reader of R' Pinkus' Torah commentary.

I received your letter, and I am very grateful to you that you read the book Tiferet Torah. It is a great merit [for an author] when Torah scholars read [his] works.

Regarding Yosef [this reference will be returned to below] - There is no question that the kinyan / method of acquisition by which Yisrael acquired the Land and will acquire it again in the future is the kinyan of "kibbush" / conquest. This is an effective method of kinyan, and the complaints of the nations of the world [against Israel] do not arise from the method of acquisition used, for those nations also obtained their lands by conquest. Think about it! The nations of the world say [to us], "You are thieves!" But is there any nation which has been living in its current land since the generation of the Tower of Bavel [when the nations of the world were first formed]? All nations obtained their lands by conquest from one another. What then is their complaint? They are asking, "Is it right [for Yisrael to conquer land]? It is understandable that we [the nations] should do so. After all, we [the nations] are heirs of Esav who received the blessing (Bereishit 27:40), 'You shall live by your sword,' and of Yishmael, who was blessed with the words (Bereishit 16:12), 'He shall be a wild man.' But you are righteous! How can you do such a thing?"

This is why the Torah goes to lengths to defend our actions [by relating that Hashem created the world and gave Eretz Yisrael to the nation of His choosing]. Our honesty is demonstrated by Yosef [at the end of this week's parashah]. He could have kept the Egyptians' land for himself [when they gave it in exchange for food], but he did not do so. He acted as if he did not exist and gave every-thing to Pharaoh. . . .

Signed with respect and friendship, Shimshon David Pinkus

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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