

TIME IS PRECIOUS

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week's Parsha, Vayigash, gives us an incredible glimpse into the depths of all facets of the Torah.

The gemara Megilah teaches us that the 'truppe', the 'melody notes' upon which the tune of the laining is based, were passed down from Moshe on Sinai. The Vilna Gaon shows us just what can be learned from the names of these notes.

Just to first get our bearings straight, let's recall what occurred in last week's parsha. Yosef had sent the brothers back home with food but had warned them not to return without bringing Binyamin with them. Yaakov agrees to send Binyamin only after Yehuda guarantees his return. Yehuda had accepted upon himself that if he wouldn't bring back Binyamin alive, he would be excommunicated in both this world and the next.

They arrive, are greeted warmly by Yosef who inquires about the welfare of their father, and food is again sent back with them. Yosef has his goblet planted in Binyamin's bag. When Binyamin is 'caught' at the start of their return journey, they are all brought back and Binyamin is sentenced to be enslaved to Yosef.

[One might wonder why Yosef chose this course of action causing his brothers all this anguish. Furthermore, Yosef could have well imagined his father's suffering and mourning. Wouldn't it have been proper for Yosef to inform his father that he is alive and well, the moment he became king?

This issue is discussed by the Ramban and the Ohr Hachaim. The Ramban explains that Yosef understood that his dreams were prophecies. He needed to ensure that first all of his brothers would bow down (the dream of the sheaves), and only then have the brothers and the parents bow down (the dream of the sun, moon and 11 stars).

The Ohr Hachaim understands that had Yosef acted in any other way, he would have been in danger of his brothers killing him. (According to the Medrash Tanchuma, once they knew it was him, they did try to kill him and the Malach Gavriel needed to intercede to protect him.) There also would have been the danger of Yaakov Avinu cursing the brothers in his anger.]

Our Parsha begins with Yehuda drawing close to argue with Yosef on Binyamin's behalf. The Vilna Gaon points out that the 'truppe' for these words is '*kadma v'azlah rve'ee, zarka munach segol*'. The meaning of these 'truppe' words is that 'the fourth one got up and went'. The fourth one being

Yehuda, the fourth son, got up and went to speak to Yosef. Why the fourth son and not Reuven the first born? Because '*zarka munach segol*'. Because he had 'thrown away his eternal rest with the *am segulah*', the treasured nation, in *olam habah*!

On a similar note (bad pun, sorry), we were supposed to be enslaved in Mitzraim for 400 years but instead we left early, after 210 years. One of the explanations given for this is that we were oppressed to such a degree that we endured 400 years of slavery in those 210 years. This is based on the pusek "*Vayemarru es chayayhem*", they embittered our lives. The Gr"a points out that the truppe for these words is, once again, *kadma v'azlah*, we got up and went. In other words, the reason for our *kadma v'azlah* was that they had embittered our lives! Even more amazing is the fact that the gematria (numerical value) of *kadma v'azlah* is 190, which is, of course, the amount of years that we '*kadma v'azla*'d (left early) (400-210=190., please pardon the grammar)!!!

The posuk says "Yosef told his brothers

"I am Yosef, is my father still alive?. The brothers were unable to answer him because they were flustered before him".

The Beis Halevi is troubled by Yosef's question. The brothers haven't yet returned home and therefore have no news on their father. Furthermore, the whole gist of Yehuda's argument is that Yosef should have compassion on their poor father! Why does Yosef then ask them if Yaakov is still alive and why can't the brothers answer?!

The Medrash Rabbah learns from this pusek,

"Woe to us on the day of judgment (*din*), woe to us on the day of reproof (*tochacha*)". If the brothers couldn't answer Yosef, the youngest of the *shvatim*, we certainly won't have any answers for Hashem.

The Beis Halevi asks two questions;

1) Where do we see in the posuk that Yosef was giving his brothers, reproof
> 2) What is the difference between *din* and *tochacha*?

He explains that Yosef was indeed giving very sharp reproof to the brothers. Yehuda was pleading with him to release Binyomin out of compassion for their poor father. He wouldn't be able to bear the pain of losing his youngest son. Yosef destroys his whole argument with the words, "I am Yosef, is my father still alive!". You Yehuda, yourself, have disproved your entire argument. **I am Yosef**, don't speak to me about concern for our father. Where was your concern when you sold me and passed me off for dead!

On this , the medrash teaches us "Woe to us on the day of judgment, woe to us on the day of reproof". The day of judgment is when Hashem takes an account of our actions. The day of reproof is

when Hashem deals with our answers. The Beis Halevi explains that on the day of judgment our explanations for lack of doing mitzvos will be refuted by Hashem based on our own actions. For example: A person will be judged for not giving enough tzedakah. The person will try to defend himself by saying that "finances were tight". Hashem will say, let's go to the video tape. (Warner Wolf, are you still out there or am I dating myself?!) The 'tape' shows that person skiing in Vale, Colorado. Why wasn't enough Torah studied? The person will answer that there wasn't enough time. Let's go to the video, there he is watching the fencing finals in Japan on ESPN. Hashem, like Yosef, will use our own actions to show us how we aren't being honest with ourselves.

May Hashem grant us the strength to examine ourselves and our priorities with the full force of *kadma v'azlah*. To look at ourselves with honesty and see if we are really using our precious time to accomplish all that we can. On that final day, may we be able to say with conviction, we have maximized our potential, Yaakov is still alive!

Good shabbos.

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