



Parshat HaShavuah

וישב

VAYEISHEV
כ"ג כסלו תשע"ו
DECEMBER 5,
2015

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HIGH SCHOOL



Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting
5:10
S"Z Kriat Shema
9:32

Sunset
5:28
Motzei
Shabbat
6:06



Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO DO RABBI AKIVA WOLK

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This week's פרשה opens with two seemingly unrelated פסוקים. We are told "וישב יעקב", that יעקב dwelt/rested in his ancestral land. This is immediately followed by the beginnings of the יוסף saga. רש"י picks up on the connection and quotes the מדרש רבה:
ועוד נדרש בו וישב ביקש יעקב בשלוה, קפץ עליו רוגזו של יוסף. צדיקים מבקשים לישב בשלוה אומר הקב"ה לא דיין לצדיקים מה שמתוקן להם לעולם הבא, אלא שמבקשים לישב בשלוה בעולם הזה

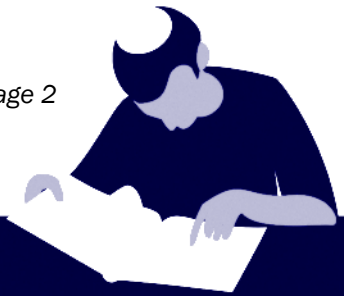
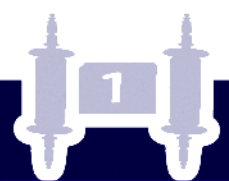
"It is further expounded upon [as follows]: "dwelt." When יעקב sought to dwell in tranquility, the troubles of יוסף sprang upon him. The righteous seek to dwell in tranquility? Said the Holy One, blessed be He, "What is prepared for the righteous in the world to come is not sufficient for them, but they seek [also] to dwell in tranquility in this world?!"

What mistake did יעקב make in seeking to "dwell," or rest, that warranted the consequence of years of heartache over יוסף?

An insight into our weekly recitation of קידוש may help us understand this episode. In reference to שבת the תורה states: "כי בו שבת מכל מלאכתו אשר ברא אלקים לעשות" - "since on this day He rested from all the things Hashem created to do."

Rabbi Avigdor Miller explains that the final word, "לעשות" - "to do", adds tremendously to our worldview. The תורה reveals here that the purpose of "all the things Hashem created" is "to do."

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Walk continued

We are placed in this world to accomplish a mission. Every event in our lives is designed for us to achieve our objective. Yet, on this lifelong mission, there is no rest. We must put in all of our energy into actualizing our purpose and goal. For, in fact, Hashem created everything in order for us - "לעשות" - to do, to achieve, to accomplish.

This, perhaps, was Yaakov's mistake to which the *מדרש רבה* alludes. While he may have accomplished a great deal in his lifetime up to this point, there was always more to do. Unfortunately, he was "וישב" and looking to rest, to end his mission. Certainly, this is a lesson for us all. We are each given unique talents and capabilities with which to achieve greatness and contribute to society. We may not know exactly what mission Hashem has sent us on, but we do know that He has created everything for us "to do" and we must never finish "doing" all we can in this world.

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL LANA ROSENTHAL ('17)

This week's parsha opens with the line, "וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו בארץ כנען" - "And Yaakov dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan." (Bereishit 37:1). Rashi cites a famous midrash that the pasuk uses the word "וישב" because Yaakov asked Hashem to live comfortably and peacefully in Canaan.

In response, Hashem scoffed, saying "Is it not enough that tzaddikim enjoy eternal tranquility in Olam Habah? Must you also live blissfully in this world?" Hashem then proceeds to give Yaakov a life of struggle, beginning with the sale of Yosef, Yaakov's favorite son, whom he then presumes is dead.

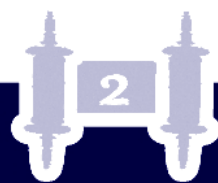
Why does Yaakov's understandable request anger Hashem? Isn't it normal to ask for blessing and peace, as we do every day in our tefillot? Furthermore, Yaakov was presumably asking for tranquility so that he could better learn Torah!

Rabbi Leib Chasman answers that instead of asking Hashem to grant him a tranquil life, Yaakov should have acknowledged that Hashem had a plan and therefore put him in very specific, albeit challenging, circumstances. The Alshich furthers this idea by commenting that it was not Yaakov's desire for peace that upset Hashem, as all human beings desire peace, but his request for peace. As such a holy tzaddik, Yaakov should have realized and accepted Hashem's plan, which did not involve a completely comfortable life.


Hashem's message to Yaakov is that in reality, there is no such thing as an utterly tranquil life. Everyone must undergo hardships. Perhaps this is why Yaakov's second name is "Yisrael", meaning "to struggle".

17 AGAIN MAYA BORZAK ('16)

Parshat Vayeishev opens with the story of 17 year old Yosef, who is tending to the flock of sheep with his brothers. Rabbi Jon Kelsen notes that we are immediately struck by his age because in Parshat Vayechi, after Yaakov moves down to Egypt with his children, he lives in Egypt for seventeen years.



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Borzak continued

Yosef lived in Canaan, Eretz Yisrael, the land of his father, for his first 17 years of life, and Yaakov lived in Egypt for the last 17 years of his life. For Yosef, Canaan is the aberration, as he had been in Egypt for the majority and the formative years of his life, while Yaakov considers Egypt an exile, his true place being in the land of Canaan.

In Parshat Vayechi, Yaakov makes Yosef promise to bury him in Canaan, the ultimate portrayal of Yaakov's own feeling of alienation in Egypt, the place that his son Yosef calls home. This presence in Egypt, Yaakov would say, is the beginning of the predetermined exile, being away from the land of Canaan. But Yaakov knows that his place is in Canaan.

It is interesting to note that while Yosef was very much an Egyptian, he hears Yaakov and recognizes the importance of the land of Israel. At the end of Bereishit, Yosef tells his brothers that he knows that he needs to be buried in Egypt as the Egyptian viceroy, but asks that the brothers remember to take his bones with them on their way back to Eretz Yisrael, the land of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, noting that Egypt will never be his (Yosef's) true home.

The 17 years of Yosef mentioned in our parsha are, therefore, reinterpreted by the 17 years of Yaakov (in Parshat Vayechi), as Egypt is exile and the land of Israel is ultimately our home.

THE SMALL MIRACLES **NETANYA MEYEROWITZ ('17)**

In Parshat Vayeishev, Yosef is thrown into a pit and then sold by his brothers, all because of the brothers' extreme jealousy over Yaakov's special attention to and admiration of their little brother Yosef. Even for extreme jealousy, the punishments the brothers give Yosef are very harsh.

A midrash explains that while in the pit, no scorpions or snakes touched Yosef. While one could argue that Hashem did not have Yosef's best interest in mind, considering He allowed the brothers to throw Yosef in the pit, the situation can be viewed from a different angle. The fact that Hashem did not let anything harm Yosef while in the pit is truly amazing. This small but incredible action can, therefore, be seen as a miracle.

When Yosef is given over to merchants in order to be taken to Egypt as a slave, Rashi explains that the caravans usually carried unpleasant smelling loads. However, on this journey, the merchants were carrying fragrant spices. Therefore, Yosef was not bothered by any bad smells on his way to Egypt. This change might be overlooked; in reality, however, it should be viewed as another small miracle from Hashem. When placed in difficult situations, people tend to forget to look for Hashem's hand in the situation or pay more attention to the ways in which Hashem seems to be removed from the situation. However, we need to understand that Hashem is always with us in every situation; it is up to us to choose to see His presence or not.



THE DREAMER

ETAN WINOGRAD ('18)

In this week's parsha, Yaakov and his 12 sons settle in the land of Canaan. His favorite son is Yosef, and the other brothers are jealous of the special treatment and attention Yosef receives from their father. Yosef tells his brothers of his two dreams, which foretell his leadership over them.

This increases the brothers' hatred towards Yosef. They throw Yosef into a pit and then sell him to a passing caravan of Plishtim. Yosef is taken to Egypt to work for Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's ministers. Potiphar's wife desires Yosef, but he rejects her advances. This angers her, so she tells Potiphar that Yosef forced himself on her, and Potiphar has Yosef put in jail.

How could the holy shevatim possess such hatred for Yosef and concern themselves with petty sibling rivalry? To understand that question we must first understand why Yosef felt the need to tell his brothers his dreams about him overpowering them. Wouldn't things have been a lot more peaceful if he had just kept his dreams to himself?

The Baalei Tosafot explain that Yosef was a navi, and the dreams were a prophecy. Yosef was obligated to repeat the dreams because a prophet who does not repeat his prophecy is punishable by death. It was due to Yosef's humility that he told the brothers that he had "dreams" and not prophecies. The brothers did not see Yosef as worthy of prophecy and therefore accepted that he just had dreams of no significance.

The brothers knew that only one of each of Avraham's and Yitzchak's children had merited to be the continuation of the family legacy and a forefather of the Jewish people; Yitzchak and Yaakov were chosen, and Yishmael and Esav were left out. The brothers saw a pattern and were scared that Yosef was proclaiming himself the "chosen one," pushing them away from the chain of tradition. They feared that Yosef was attempting to become the sole successor in the tradition of the Avot, pushing them aside.

The Sforno adds that the brothers viewed Yosef as a rodef, a murderer who is punishable by death. This would mean that the brothers' hatred and judgement was in full consideration and accordance with halacha. The midrash suggests that they included Hashem in their plans when making conclusions about Yosef. The brothers didn't think they were doing something wrong, but instead thought they were actually carrying out the desire of Hashem.

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