

Parshas Vayigash in a Nutshell
(Genesis 44:18–47:27)

Judah approaches Joseph to plead for the release of Benjamin, offering himself as a slave to the Egyptian ruler in Benjamin's stead. Upon witnessing his brothers' loyalty to one another, Joseph reveals his identity to them. "I am Joseph," he declares. "Is my father still alive?"

The brothers are overcome by shame and remorse, but Joseph comforts them. "It was not you who sent me here," he says to them, "but G-d. It has all been ordained from Above to save us, and the entire region, from famine."

The brothers rush back to Canaan with the news. Jacob comes to Egypt with his sons and their families—seventy souls in all—and is reunited with his beloved son after 22 years.

(continued next column)



By saying something happens because of Divine providence, we are not implying that one should merely grin and bear it. Instead, we should be genuinely happy, because everything that G-d does is for the good. G-d is the ultimate of good; it is impossible that He will do anything that is not good. This should endow a person with the confidence and security of knowing that he is being led down a path that will lead him to the most complete benefit possible.

-- The Rebbe

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On his way to Egypt he receives the divine promise: "Fear not to go down to Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again."

Joseph gathers the wealth of Egypt by selling food and seed during the famine. Pharaoh gives Jacob's family the fertile county of Goshen to settle, and the children of Israel prosper in their Egyptian exile. ❖

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Halachic Zmanim

Shabbos, Dec 11, 2021
Eastern Standard Time

Earliest Tallis..... 6:09 AM
Latest Morning Shema 9:28 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola) 12:14 PM
Plag Hamincha..... 3:35 PM
Earliest Evening Shema 5:00 PM

Anshei Lubavitch Congregation

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Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

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Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

Shabbos Schedule

Erev Shabbos – Dec 10 / Teves 6

Candle Lighting 4:10 pm

Mincha 4:10 pm

Shabbos Day – Dec 11 / Teves 7

Shacharis..... 9:30 am*

Torah Reading..... 10:40 am

Kiddush 12:00 pm

Mincha 4:15 pm

Rabbi's Drasha 4:35 pm

Shabbos Ends..... 5:14 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:28 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):

Minyan

Shacharis (Mon-Fri) 6:15 am

Shacharis (Sunday) 9:00 am

Mincha (Sun-Thurs) 1:45 pm

Maariv (Sun-Thurs) 9:15 pm

Bulletin

*This week's Bulletin
is sponsored by
The Berman Law Office .*

Chassidic Masters

The Awesome Plot

*Based on the teachings of
the Lubavitcher Rebbe*

Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com

The Midrash states that the entire saga of Joseph and his brothers — the brothers' seemingly uncontrollable jealousy of him; his sale, imprisonment and rise to power; their eventual confrontation and rapprochement — was all an "awesome plot" devised by G-d to bring Jacob and his family to Egypt.

When Jacob sent Joseph to go check up on his brothers — a mission from which Joseph did not return and was lost to his father for the next 22 years — the Torah describes it thus: "And he sent him from the valley (literally, 'the depth') of Hebron, and he came to Shechem." Where is "the valley of Hebron"? ask our sages. Hebron sits on the high ground! But the meaning of the phrase, they explain, is allegorical: Joseph was dispatched on his way from "the depth of Hebron" — from the depths of the Divine plan that had been confided to Abraham, the patriarch buried in the Cave of Machpeila in Hebron.

At the "Covenant Between the Pieces," Abraham had been given a choice by G-d: Shall your children suffer galut (exile) or gehenah (hell)? Abraham chose galut, thus sending Joseph on the road to Egypt, to be followed by the rest of his family, so that the Children of Israel should experience four generations of exile and slavery before proceeding to Mount Sinai to receive their mandate as G-d's chosen people.

But why did it have to be so complicated? Was there no other way to get Israel and family to Egypt? The Midrash offers the following parable in explanation:

This is comparable to a cow upon whom it was desired to place a yoke, but the cow was withholding her neck from the yoke. What did they do? They took her calf from behind her and drew him to the place where they wanted her to plow, and the calf was bleating. When the cow heard her calf bleating, she went despite herself, because of her child.

By the same token, Jacob might have had to be brought down to Egypt in chains, but then G-d declared: "He is My firstborn son; shall I then bring him down in disgrace?" Now, if I provoke Pharaoh [to forcefully bring him to Egypt], I will not bring him down with befitting honor. Therefore I will draw his son before him, and so he will follow despite himself.

This explanation, however, seems to raise more questions than it answers. Was the manner in which Jacob was made to arrive in Egypt any more pleasant than if he'd been brought down as a prisoner of Pharaoh's?

Were the pain and despair of the 22 years in which he mourned his beloved son preferable to the discomfort of physical chains? Certainly Jacob would have readily suffered that indignity to spare Joseph his years of slavery and imprisonment, and his other sons their years of guilt and remorse!

Furthermore, in the final analysis Jacob was forced to go down to Egypt, by the fact that G-d had sent Joseph there. In what way was this any less coercive than if he had been physically forced? Why, for that matter, did he have to be coerced in any way? What if G-d would have simply appeared to him one day, and said, "Jacob, take your whole family and go to Egypt. It's all part of My grand plan for the people of Israel" — would Jacob not have complied?

Chassidic teaching explains that two counter-objectives had to be achieved. On the one hand, Jacob had to be compelled to relocate to Egypt — a voluntary migration would not have been an exile! Galut, by definition, is a place where one does not want to be — a place that is contrary to one's intrinsic self and will.

(Continued next page)



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On the other hand, the fact that Jacob arrived in Egypt in honor, glory and in a position of power as the father of that country's ruler, rather than as a prisoner in chains, meant that he and his descendants would never truly be subject to their host country. Thus the key to Israel's eventual liberation from Egypt was already "programmed" into the circumstances under which their galut commenced.

This was G-d's "awesome plot": to force Jacob to go down to Egypt, but to do so in a way that did not entail Egypt's power over him, but his power over Egypt. What brought Jacob to Egypt was the fact that his son was the ruler of the land; but the chain of events that brought this about had to develop without his knowledge and contrary to his will. ❖

From Our Sages

Judah approached him . . . (Genesis 44:18)

Said Rabbi Yehudah: The verb "he approached" (vayigash) implies an approach to battle, as in the verse "So Joab and the people that were with him approached unto battle" (II Samuel 10:13).

Rabbi Nechemiah said: The verb "he approached" implies a coming near for conciliation, as in the verse "Then the children of Judah approached Joshua" (Joshua 14:6).

The sages said: It implies coming near for prayer, as in the verse "It came to pass, at the time of the evening offering, that Elijah the prophet approached . . ." (I Kings, 18:36).

Rabbi Eleazar combined all these views Judah approached Joseph for all three, saying: If it be war, I approach for war; if it be conciliation, I approach for conciliation; if it be for entreaty, I approach to entreat.

-- (Midrash Rabbah)

"Let your servant remain instead of the boy as a slave to my lord" (Genesis 44:33)

[Said Judah to Joseph:] I am more useful than him in every regard: in strength, as a warrior or as a servant.

-- (Rashi)

G-d deals with man measure for measure: because Judah had sold Joseph into slavery, he was now compelled to offer himself to Joseph as a slave.

-- (Abarbanel)

Israel journeyed with all that he had, and came to Be'er-Sheva (Genesis 46:1)

Why did he go there? Said Rabbi Nachman: He went to cut down the cedars which his grandfather Abraham had planted in Be'er-Sheva. These cedars were then taken along when the children of Israel left Egypt, and were used for the construction of the Sanctuary in the desert.

-- (Midrash Rabbah)

For all the years that the children of Israel were in Egypt, Jacob's cedars served as a link to their past and a promise of their future. "This is not your home," the growing trees said. "You, like we, hail from a loftier, holier place. And soon you will leave this depraved land, to be reclaimed by G-d as His people. You will then uproot us from this foreign land and carry us triumphantly to Sinai, where you will construct out of us a dwelling for the Divine Presence in your midst."

-- (The Lubavitcher Rebbe) ❖

Haftorah for Vayigash in a nutshell

Ezekiel 37:15-28

This week's haftorah mentions the fusion of the kingdoms of Judah and Joseph during the Messianic Era, echoing the beginning of this week's Torah reading: "And Judah approached him [Joseph]."

The prophet Ezekiel shares a prophecy he received, in which G-d instructs him to take two sticks and to write one on, "For Judah and for the children of Israel his companions" and on the other, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions." After doing so he was told to put the two near each other, and G-d fused them into one stick.

G-d explains to Ezekiel that these sticks are symbolic of the House of Israel, that was divided into two (often warring) kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom that was established by Jeroboam, a member of the Tribe of Ephraim, and the Southern Kingdom, that remained under the reign of the Davidic (Judean) Dynasty. The fusing of the two sticks represented the merging of the kingdoms that will transpire during the Messianic Era — with the Messiah, a descendant of David, at the helm of this unified empire.

"So says the L-rd G-d: 'Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side, and I will bring them to their land. And I will make them into one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be to them all as a king...'"

The haftorah ends with G-d's assurance that "they shall dwell on the land that I have given to My servant, to Jacob, wherein your forefathers lived; and they shall dwell upon it, they and their children and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever." ❖

There are those who chose the spiritual over the physical. They look at the spiritual and the physical as opposites, and opt for the spiritual. There are, however, certain select individuals whose spiritual awareness is so great that it enables them to understand how G-dliness encompasses the physical as well, how there is no entity that is apart from Him.

This is the meaning of the words "G-d is one" in the Shema. Not only that there is only one G-d, but that everything is at one with Him.

This was the nature of Joseph's awareness. He did not see the need to retreat from material involvement to be involved with the spiritual. Because of his single-minded devotion to G-d, he was not separate from Him although he was involved in material tasks. Although he embraced worldly activity, it did not take him away from his spiritual consciousness.

-- The Rebbe

שבת שלום גוט שבת!



Good Shabbos to all!