



“Yosef could not hold out any longer”

An Unbelievable Revelation from the Chiddushei HaRim If Yosef Had Held Out We Would Have Been Redeemed

This week's parsha is parshas Vayigash. We see how Yosef HaTzaddik tests his brothers and schemes to have his brother Binyamin brought to him in Mitzrayim. It is incumbent on us to reconcile Yosef's enigmatic behavior. Undoubtedly, he knew that this would cause his father, Yaakov, much grief. He even accuses Binyamin of stealing his chalice and threatens to keep him in Mitzrayim as a slave. We will endeavor to explain Yosef's reason for concocting this intricate plot surrounding Binyamin even though it would inevitably cause his father, Yaakov, to suffer.

We find a wonderful explanation in the commentary of the Ramban on parshas Mikeitz (Bereishis 42, 9): “ויזכור יוסף את החלומות אשר חלם להם ויאמר אליהם מרגלים אתם”—**Yosef recalled the dreams that he had dreamt about them, and he said to them, “You are spies!”** Clearly, this refers to the two dreams he recounted to his brothers in parshas Vayeishev. In the first dream, he told them (ibid. 37, 6): “שמעו נא החלום הזה אשר חלמתי, והנה אנחנו מאלמים אלומים בתוך השדה, והנה קמה אלומתי וגם נצבה, והנה תסובינה אלומותיכם ותשתחווין לאלומתי”—**please listen to this dream that I dreamt: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the middle of the field. Behold my sheaf rose and stood up straight; and behold your sheaves surrounded it and bowed down to my sheaf.** This dream alluded to the eleven shevatim that were destined to bow down Yosef as the Viceroy of Mitzrayim.

The second dream contained significant differences. Here is the narrative related to the second dream (ibid. 9): “ויחלום עוד חלום אחר ויספר אותו לאחיו, ויאמר הנה חלמתי חלום”

—עוד והנה השמש והירח ואחד עשר כוכבים משתחווים לי”**—he dreamt another dream and related it to his brothers. He said, “Behold, I dreamt another dream: Behold! The sun and the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”** The sun and moon in this dream refer to his father and mother; he foresaw that they were also destined to bow down to him. Hence, the Torah describes Yaakov's reaction (ibid. 10): “ויספר אל אביו ואל אחיו, ויגער בו אביו ויאמר לו מה החלום הזה אשר חלמתי, הבוא נבוא אני ואמך ואחיך להשתחוות לך ארצה”**—he related it to his father and his brothers; his father scolded him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamt? Am I and your mother and your brothers going to come and bow down to you to the ground?”** Rashi comments: **But hasn't your mother already died? He (Yaakov) did not realize that the words of the dream applied to Bilhah, who raised him (Yosef) like his mother.**

In this context, the Ramban explains that Yosef's ruse enabled both dreams to come to fruition. Initially, Binyamin came to Mitzrayim with the rest of his brothers. Thus, the first dream would be fulfilled; eleven brothers would bow down to Yosef as the Viceroy of Mitzrayim. Therefore, he did not want to reveal his true identity to them at that point; it was not yet time for Yaakov to join the eleven brothers.

Once the first dream had come true, he wanted the second dream to also come true. In other words, it was then time for Yaakov and Bilhah—the sun and moon—to also come and bow down to him. Therefore, he revealed his true identity to his

brothers and sent wagons to bring Yaakov and his entire household to Mitzrayim.

In truth, however, the Ramban had difficulty explaining one crucial point in this sequence of events. Why was it necessary for Yosef to falsely accuse Binyamin of being a thief and threaten to enslave him? He knew most certainly that this would cause his father, Yaakov, undue grief and heartache. Only after Yehudah approached him boldly and addressed him in a confrontational manner, explaining that their father Yaakov's intense grief would kill him, did Yosef relent. He could not hold out any longer; he revealed his true identity to his brothers.

Had Yosef Held Out He Would Have Hastened the Geulah

We will begin to shed some light on the matter by introducing a fantastic chiddush brought down in the sefer Zechut Avos in the name of his elder, the great author of the Chiddushei HaRim, zy" a. He deduces from the language of the passuk (ibid. 45, 1): **וְיֹסֵף יָכוֹל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק—Yosef could no longer hold out.** This wording suggests that, in fact, Yosef wanted to resist revealing his identity to them; however, for some reason, he could not hold out (control his emotions) any longer. What were Yosef's reasons and motives for wanting to delay revealing his identity? He explains: **The entire galus hinges on this. Had Yosef held out a bit longer, Yisrael would not have endured another galus. This is evident from the statement: "Yosef could not contain his emotions in the presence of all who stood before him." "All who stood . . ." refers to the galus and all the troubles to follow.**

This fascinating insight is also presented by his grandson, the Sefas Emes (Vayigash 5641), who also explains why immediately after Yosef reveals his identity to his brothers, it says (ibid. 14): **וַיִּפְּלוּ—then he fell upon his brother Binyamin's neck and wept; and Binyamin wept upon his neck.** Based on the Gemara (Megillah 16b), Rashi explains: Yosef wept over the two Batei HaMikdash that were destined to be built in Binyamin's territory and would ultimately

be destroyed; Binyamin wept over the Mishkan of Shiloh that was destined to be built in Yosef's territory and would ultimately be destroyed.

We might wonder why Yosef chose that precise moment to cry over the destruction of the two Batei HaMikdash. According to the Sefas Emes, when Yosef realized that he could no longer restrain himself, he also realized that Yisrael would not merit the complete geulah without being subjected to further exiles. This is why he cried over the churban of the Beis HaMikdash.

Based on this introduction, we will now endeavor to explain the following: (1) Why could Yosef not contain his emotions and conceal his identity any longer? (2) Why, if Yosef had managed to control his emotions and refrained from revealing his identity to his brothers, would they have been granted a geulah without any further galuyos? (3) How much longer did Yosef have to wait before revealing his true identity for this to happen? And what needed to transpire for Yosef to be ready to reveal his identity and to hasten the geulah?

Yosef Saw that Yehudah Was Ready to Destroy All of Mitzrayim

To clarify the matter and explain it in greater depth, I would like to propose an intriguing explanation based on what Chazal teach us in the Midrash Rabbah (B.R. 93, 8) and in the Midrash Tanchuma (Vayigash 5). Unbeknownst to the shevatim, Yosef understood their language—"lashon hakodesh." He was no longer able to contain himself, because he heard Yehudah tell the other brothers that they would destroy Mitzrayim if Yosef refused to release Binyamin. Here is the passage in the Midrash Tanchuma:

Without delay, Yehudah said to Naftali (who could run very fast), "Go and check out how many marketplaces there are in Mitzrayim." He quickly went and returned. He informed him (Yehudah), "There are twelve." Yehudah then said to his brothers, "I will destroy three of them; let each of you take one; we will not leave a single man alive. His brothers argued, "Yehudah, Mitzrayim is not like Shechem. If you

destroy Mitzrayim, you will destroy the entire world.” At that moment, Yosef could not restrain himself any longer. Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman said: Yosef placed himself in grave danger. For, if the brothers killed him, not a single person would have been aware of it. So, why did Yosef demand: “Remove everyone (all of his servants and attendants) from before me”? Because Yosef thought to himself, “I would rather die than shame my brothers before the Egyptians.”

Let us add another tantalizing tidbit to this explanation by referring to Yehudah’s remark to Yosef (ibid. 44, 30): **“ועתה כבואי אל עבדך אבי והנער איננו אתנו ונפשו קשורה בנפשו, והיה כראותו כי אין הנער ומת והורידו עבדיך את שיבת עבדך אבינו בניגון שאולה.”** **And now, if I come to your servant, my father, and the youth is not with us—since his soul is so bound up with his soul—it will happen that when he sees that the youth is gone, he will die, and your servants will have brought down the old age of your servant, our father, in sorrow to the grave.** The Sefas Emes (Vayigash 5639) explains why Yehudah was so certain that if Binyamin did not return from Mitzrayim that Yaakov would die as a result of his extreme grief:

It seems that he deduced this from what Yaakov Avinu, a”h, remarked to them (ibid. 43, 14): “And may Kel Shakkai (שד”י) grant you mercy.” Rashi explains (the significance of this divine name): “He Who told the world (during creation), ‘Enough!,’ let him say, ‘Enough!’ to my troubles (suffering).” Surely, Yaakov Avinu, a”h, would not have made this declaration unless he knew that his life was at stake . . . Thus, Yehudah knew “that when he (Yaakov) sees that the youth is gone (absent), he will die.” Therefore, when Yosef heard this, he was compelled to reveal the truth to them, because he realized that the moment to reveal it to them had arrived.

Now, if we combine the explanation of the Midrash with the explanation of the Sefas Emes, it is clear why Yosef could not avoid revealing his identity to his brothers any longer. First of all, he understood from Yehudah’s remarks that Yaakov would not be able to endure the agonizing losses of both Yosef and

Binyamin; his grief would be unbearable. Furthermore, as the Midrash explains, he overheard Yehudah telling the other brothers that he would destroy Mitzrayim, if Yosef did not return Binyamin to them. Thus, Yosef surmised that he must yield; he must reveal his true identity to them, because the time for the geulah had not yet arrived. This is why Yosef could not hold out any longer.

Nevertheless, we must still explain why if Yosef had managed to restrain himself and resist revealing his true identity, they would have merited the geulah, and future galuyos would have been averted. So, what was Yosef waiting for? Ideally, what needed to happen for the geulah to be imminent?

Yosef’s First Dream Concerned His Sovereignty in Mitzrayim His Second Dream Concerned Mashiach ben Yosef and the Final Geulah

To answer these enigmatic questions, we will refer to the wisdom of Chazal regarding Yosef’s second dream: **“Behold! The sun and the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”** They explain why this angered Yaakov Avinu causing him to scold Yosef. Here is the pertinent passage from the Midrash (B.R. 84, 11):

And he said to him, “What is this dream that you dreamed?” Rabbi Levi in the name of Rabbi Chama bar Chanina: Apparently, our patriarch Yaakov believed that “Techiyas HaMeisim” (the Resurrection of the Dead) would occur in his lifetime, as it is stated: “Are we to come”—will I and your brothers come? That is credible. But “I and your mother”—is your mother not dead? Yet you say: “I, your mother, and your brothers?!” However, Yaakov Avinu did not know that the matter related to Bilhah, Rachel’s maidservant, who raised him as though she was his mother.

Thus, we learn that Yaakov Avinu understood the dream to be referring to himself and Rachel—that they would bow down to Yosef along with the eleven shevatim. So, on the one hand, he scolded Yosef, so that the other brothers would not be jealous of him. In reality, however, Yaakov believed in the veracity

of the dream. This then is the implication of the passuk (ibid. 37, 11): "ויקנאו בו אחיו ואביו שמר את הדבר"—**so his brothers were jealous of him, but his father waited for the matter.** In other words, Yaakov hoped and anticipated that the dream would be fulfilled in his lifetime through "Tehiyas HaMeisim."

Nevertheless, the Midrash concludes by saying: **Yaakov Avinu did not know that the matter related to Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, who raised him as though she was his mother.** As we will show based on our sacred sefarim, the Midrash teaches us that the dream was fulfilled in Yaakov's lifetime with Bilhah taking the place of Rachel. In reality, however, Yaakov's interpretation of the dream was correct. As we know, Yaakov's midah is "emes," as it is written (Michah 7, 20): "תתן אמת ליעקב"—**grant "emes" to Yaakov.** The sun and moon are indeed Yaakov and Rachel. At the time of the geulah, they will come and bow down to Mashiach ben Yosef, who will pave the way for the complete geulah which will be accomplished by Mashiach ben David.

This intriguing concept is taught by Rabbi Yaakov Sikili, a student of the Rashba, in the sefer Toras HaMinchah (16), where he explains both of Yosef's dreams. He proposes that the first dream foretold that Yosef was destined to reign over Mitzrayim. In that dream, he saw sheaves, because as the ruler of Mitzrayim, Yosef was destined to provide grain for the entire world. The second dream, on the other hand, related to the future geulah, when he would be Mashiach ben Yosef, and would reign over all of Yisrael. Therefore, the sun and moon were not mentioned in the first dream, because his mother, Rachel, was not alive. They were only mentioned in the second dream which would be fulfilled at the time of the future geulah. Then both Yaakov and Rachel will come to him.

Along these same lines, we find a fantastic interpretation of Yosef's two dreams from one of our great luminaries, the Bnei Yissaschar (MarCheshvan 1, 8). In his own sacred words, he proves convincingly that the consecration of the third Beis HaMikdash will occur in the month of Cheshvan. According to the order of the flags in the midbar, the month of Cheshvan

is associated with Menashe, Yosef's first son. At that time, the words of the navi will be fulfilled (Yeshayah 30, 26): "והיה אור הלבנה כאור החמה"—**and the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun.** In other words, the sun and the moon—Yaakov and Rachel—will come to bow down before Yosef.

Yosef Planned to Remain in Mitzrayim Alone with Binyamin to Eliminate All Future Galuyos

Following this line of reasoning, we will now focus on the plan of Yosef HaTzaddik to refrain from revealing his true identity to his brothers at that juncture. Let us refer to the Gemara (Succah 52b). There, we are taught that HKB"H will bring two Mashiachs to redeem Yisrael. Initially, **Mashiach ben Yosef**, a descendant of Yosef, will come. Subsequently, **Mashiach ben David**, from the shevet of Yehudah, will come and rule as king.

To explain the matter, we will refer to a teaching from Chazal in the Pesikta D'Rav Kahana (3, 13): "אגדה: היא שאין זרעו של עשו נופל אלא ביד בניה של רחל"—**it is told that the descendants of Eisav will only be defeated by the children of Rachel.** As we know, the final galus is the galus of Edom—exile under the reign of the descendants of Eisav. Since the descendants of Eisav will only suffer defeat at the hands of Rachel's children, Mashiach ben Yosef must come first to subjugate the descendants of Eisav in galus Edom. That will set the stage for Mashiach ben David to be King of Yisrael.

This helps us better understand to some degree the intent of Yosef HaTzaddik. He planned to keep Binyamin with him in Mitzrayim and to have the other brothers go back home to Yaakov Avinu. As we have learned, the final geulah from Edom will only be accomplished by the children of Rachel. Therefore, Yosef wanted to make the requisite preparations with Binyamin at his side to abolish the klipah of Eisav that would prevail in the final galus. He anticipated that Yaakov Avinu together with the other shevatim would suffer greatly over the loss and absence of Yosef and Binyamin. This would motivate them to make the requisite tikun in Eretz Yisrael to hasten the geulah. Together, Yaakov and the shevatim in

Eretz Canaan, and Yosef and Binyamin in Mitzrayim, would complete the tikun necessary to bring about the complete geulah.

However, the time for the ultimate geulah was not yet at hand. Therefore, HKB”H arranged for Yaakov Avinu to be unable to bear the loss of Binyamin. Hence, Yaakov declared: **“He Who told the world, ‘Enough!,’ should say, ‘Enough!,’ to my troubles.”** Hearing this declaration, Yehudah understood that the time for the geulah had not yet arrived. Therefore, he told his brothers that if Yosef refused to release Binyamin, he would destroy all of Mitzrayim. As a result: **“Yosef could no longer contain his emotions in the presence of all those standing before him.”** He felt compelled to reveal his true identity prematurely. Consequently, this caused him to weep over the churban of the Batei HaMikdash, an eventuality he was unable to prevent.

Yosef a Gilgul of Noach Paved the Way for All of Yisrael Reincarnations of the Generation of the Mabul to Sanctify Themselves in Mitzrayim

It now gives me immense pleasure to present a noteworthy idea based on what we have discussed concerning the passuk: **“ולא יכול יוסף להתאפק לכל הנצבים עליו”**. We will begin by introducing what the divine kabbalist, the Rama of Pano (who heard it from his mentor Rabbi Yisrael Sarug, who heard it from his mentor the Arizal), wrote in the sefer Gilgulei Neshamos (153): **“גח שנשתכר ונתגלה בתוך אהלו, נתקן ביוסף שלא שתה יין, עד שראה את אחיו—Noach who got drunk and naked inside his tent, was rectified by Yosef, who abstained from wine until he saw his brothers; then they drank and got inebriated with him.** This teaches us that Noach, who is depicted as a tzaddik, reincarnated into Yosef.

I believe that we can explain why the righteous Noach reincarnated into Yosef HaTzaddik based on what the Arizal explains in Sha’ar HaPesukim (Shemos). The neshamos of the generation of the mabul, who went astray and became extremely depraved, reincarnated into the neshamos of Yisrael in Mitzrayim. Thus, we see a parallel between them. Just like the generation of the mabul drowned in the

waters of the flood, so, too, the newborn males of Yisrael were thrown into the waters of the Nile to drown. For, Pharaoh decreed (Shemos 1, 22): **“כל הבן”** **“הילוד היאורה תשליכוהו”**. Pharaoh eventually annulled this decree after Yocheved placed Moshe in a basket on the banks of the Nile, because his sorcerers believed that that Yisrael’s savior had drowned.

Now, we have learned in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 108a): **“תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל אף על נח נחתך גזר דין אלא שמצא חן בעיני ה’”**. **A Baraisa was taught in the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael: The decree to punish and destroy the world with the mabul also applied to Noach; however, he was spared, since he found favor in the eyes of Hashem, as it states (Bereishis 6, 7): “I have reconsidered My having made them; but Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem.”** The commentaries, led by the Alshich hakadosh and the Chasam Sofer, explain that although Noach is depicted as a pure tzaddik, nevertheless, he had a major flaw. He was guilty of not going out of his way to influence the people of his generation to abide by the seven mitzvos of “bnei Noach”—the seven Noahide laws. In Teivat Gomeh (Noach 4), the Pri Megadim explains that Noach adopted a lifestyle of seclusion with Hashem; he neglected to admonish the people of his generation and to guide them to be upright and behave properly.

We can suggest that this is why Noach reincarnated into Yosef HaTzaddik. It afforded him the opportunity to rectify the neshamos of his generation who had reincarnated into Yisrael in Mitzrayim. Furthermore, we are taught in the Midrash (V.R. 32, 5): **“יוסף ירד למצרים וגדר עצמו מן הערוה, ונגדרו ישראל בזכותו. אמר רבי חייא בר אבא, יוסף ירד—Yosef went down to Mitzrayim and guarded himself against immorality and, in his merit, Yisrael guarded themselves against immorality. Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said: The guarding against immoral behavior was itself sufficient to warrant Yisrael being redeemed on its account.** In other words, the neshamos of Yisrael in Mitzrayim—the reincarnations of the generation of the mabul—managed to refrain from immorality solely in the merit of Yosef, the gilgul of Noach.

Upon closer scrutiny, the similarity between Noach and Yosef is even more apparent. Noach lived in a corrupt, exceedingly immoral generation. Yet, he remained righteous and became the epitome of a tzaddik. The Torah attests to this in the following passuk (ibid. 9): **”נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדורותיו את האלקים—התהלך נח—Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noach walked with Hashem.** Similarly, Yosef—the gilgul of Noach—was subjected to a difficult ordeal in Mitzrayim, a place of extreme corruption and immorality. Yet, he did not behave like them; he remained steadfast in his righteousness and kedushah. This is attested to by Rashi’s commentary on the passuk (Shemos 1, 5): **”ויוסף היה במצרים—and Yosef was in Mitzrayim.** Rashi comments: **This comes to inform you of Yosef’s righteousness. He was the same Yosef that used to tend to his father’s sheep; he was the same Yosef who “was in Mitzrayim,” became king, and remained firm in his righteousness.**

It seems that it was for this reason that HKB”H forestalled the geulah until Yaakov Avinu went down to Mitzrayim along with all of the shevatim and their offspring to be in galus in Mitzrayim. Had the geulah happened beforehand, the neshamos of the generation

of the mabul would have not been afforded a tikun. Therefore, it was incumbent upon Yosef—the gilgul of Noach—to provide a tikun for the neshamos of the generation of the mabul. Therefore, he tried to resist revealing his true identity to his brothers until he had arranged for the complete geulah.

This illuminates for us the meaning of the passuk: **”ולא יכול יוסף להתאפק.** He did not want to reveal his identity yet to his brothers, because he intended to hasten the arrival of the complete geulah; however, he could not hold out any longer. The narrative explains why HKB”H arranged for Yosef to not be able to hold out any longer, and as a consequence, the hastening of the geulah was prevented from above. It was: **”לכל הנצבים עליו”—**because of the presence of all the neshamos of the generation of the mabul that had reincarnated into Mitzrayim for the gilgul of Noach to rectify them. We can suggest a wonderful remez in this phrase: **”לכל הנצבים עליו.”** The word **”כל”** is used in this passuk and it is also used in relation to the depravity of the generation of the mabul (Bereishis 6, 13): **”קץ כל בשר בא לפני”—the end of all flesh has come before Me.** They were there for Yosef to provide their tikun.



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