

NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM
THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Crying Over the Right Things

וַיִּפֹּל עַל צַוְאֵרֵי בְנִימִן אָחִיו וַיִּבֶךְ וּבְנֵימִן בָּכָה עַל צַוְאֲרָיו: (בראשית מה, יד)

He fell on the neck of his brother Binyamin and cried, and Binyamin cried on his neck. (*Bereishis* 45:14)

Yosef cried on Binyamin's shoulder, and Binyamin cried on his. Yosef foresaw the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* which was within Binyamin's borders, and Binyamin foresaw the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* which was within Yosef's borders.

But why was this issue on their minds at the time of their reunion after so many years? Surely when brothers meet each other after a long period of separation, each asks the other how he has been, and talks about what has happened since they last met. It seems strange that they focused at this time on a sad event that was hundreds of years away.

This truth, this is not a question at all. The *Beis Hamikdash* is all about the presence of the *Shechinah*, in other words, our connection and relationship with *Hashem*. So the issue really was: how does *Hashem* figure into their meeting with one another? This is the only true issue. The joy of Yosef and Binyamin meeting each other was the joy

of the unification of the Jewish people, by means of which the *Shechinah* rests on us, and this represents the *Geulah* of the Jewish people. So they started to rejoice. But then they envisioned the future burning of the *Beis Hamikdash*, so they started to cry.

It was the same when Yaakov and Rachel first met. It says that "Yaakov kissed Rachel and raised his voice and cried." Rashi explains he foresaw that she is not destined to be buried with him. This raises a similar question: why was he thinking about their future burial plots the first time he met her? Now is the time to think about getting married, not about their funeral.

However, someone who is perturbed by this question simply doesn't understand what took place when they met. Yaakov is the embodiment of *midas Tiferes*, which is the *midah* of *Kudsha Brich Hu*. Rachel represents the *Shechinah Hakedoshah* (it says in many *siddurim* that *Tikun Rachel* is *tikun Hashechinah*). Thus, Yaakov meeting Rachel represented ייחוד

קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתה. They started to cry because right now, there is a unification of *Kudsha Brich Hu* with the *Shechinah*, and this represents *Geulas Yisrael*, but it won't last forever. The Jewish people is destined to be exiled. Rachel will be buried in *Kever Rachel*, and Yaakov in *Maaras Hamachpelah*. If not for this

separation between Yaakov and Rachel, *Galus* would not take place!

For the *Avos*, and for Yosef and Binyamin, there is no issue other than *Geulas Yisrael* and the presence of the *Shechinah*. When they foresee that this is destined to be lacking, they cry. ●

What to be Happy About

וַיִּגְדּוּ לוֹ לֵאמֹר עוֹד יוֹסֵף חַי וְכִי הוּא מִשָּׁל בְּכָל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם (בראשית מה, כו)

They recounted to him, saying, “Yosef is still alive, and he rules over all the land of Egypt.” (Bereishis 45:26)

Yosef's brothers came back home and told their father Yaakov two things. First they told him that “Yosef is still alive,” implying he is still a *tzaddik*, as only a *tzaddik* is truly “alive.”

The second thing they told Yaakov is that Yosef “rules over all the land of Egypt.” They recounted his glory, grandeur and wealth.

Yaakov, after hearing their reports, responded: “It is great that Yosef my son is alive.” It was enough to hear that Yosef maintained his *tzidkus*. But he didn't see what was so important about Yosef having become a great and powerful ruler. The important thing is that he is a *tzaddik*, and this made Yaakov happy, this made Yaakov want to go and see him. If *chas v'shalom* Yosef would have lost his *tzidkus*, Yaakov would not have had the desire to go see him.

This shows us what parents should be proud of. Fame and success are not important. Torah is.

When Yaakov finally saw Yosef, he said, “I will die only once, after having seen you, for you are still alive.”

As we mentioned, “alive” implies that he is a *tzaddik*. Yaakov can now leave this world with confidence. His son's merits will continue to benefit him even after his death. This is because someone who brings others to do *mitzvos* has a share in those *mitzvos*.

If we raise our children to Torah learning and Torah observance, besides the *nachas*, we will share in their merits in the next world. The reverse is also true: if a person neglects to raise his children to Torah and *mitzvos*, beside the grief and shame it causes him in this world, he will be punished for their sins even after he passes away.

This is why Yaakov was confident after seeing Yosef that he will die only once. If Yosef had become like the wicked Egyptians, Yaakov would die and die again – he would be punished over and over, for all the sins that his son continues to commit even after Yaakov passes away. But now that he saw how Yosef kept up his *tzidkus*, Yaakov has nothing to worry about. On the contrary, he will ascend from *madreigah* to *madreigah* after he passes away. ●

לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורג זצ"ל
ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

נדבת נדידהם ~ עשרת זקנים בני בנים ותפארת בנינים אבותם

Stand Apart

וְהָיָה כִּי יִקְרָא לָכֶם פְּרֻעָה וְאָמַר מִה מַּעֲשִׂיכֶם, וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֲנָשִׁי מִקִּנְיָה הָיוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ וְגו' בַּעֲבוּר תֵּשְׁבוּ בָאָרֶץ גִּשָּׁן כִּי תוֹעֵבַת מִצְרַיִם כָּל רְעָה צֹאן: (בראשית מו, לג-לד)

And it will be that when Pharaoh will call for you, and will say, “What do you do?” you should say, “Your servants have been herdsmen... so that you will dwell in the land of Goshen, because the Egyptians detest all shepherds. (*Bereishis* 46:33–34)

We see that Yosef wanted his brothers to live in Goshen. Why? Rashi says he wanted them to be far from Pharaoh, to be out in the land of Goshen.

We already saw in *Parshas Vayishlach* how *Yaakov Avinu* made sure not to join up with Eisav. When Eisav offered to travel along with them, Yaakov turned him down, and told him יַעֲבֹר נָא אֶדְנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ וְאֲנִי אֲתַנְהִילָהּ לְאִטִּי לְרֶגֶל הַמִּלָּאכָה אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי וּלְרֶגֶל הַיְלָדִים עַד אֲשֶׁר אָבָא אֶל אֶדְנִי שְׁעִירָה.¹ He told Eisav that they travel agonizingly slow, because of all the children and all the flocks, so he should just go ahead at his own pace. That's the simple meaning of the verse. *Chazal* say there is an allusion here that until *Mashiach* comes, they will not meet, they will not join with one another. (Only when *Mashiach* comes will they meet, to make an accounting for all the rivers of Jewish blood that Eisav spilled.)

And here in this week's *parshah*, we see how important it was to them not to dwell close to the non-Jews, even though they had to live in their land. They preferred to humiliate themselves and say they were herdsmen, so the Egyptians will settle them far away. This repeated itself when Yosef presented his brothers to Pharaoh. He took along the weakest of his brothers, so they won't be appointed to official positions.

It was this way with the Jewish people throughout their exile. Our fathers and forefathers didn't want to be close to the "high ups" and to be involved with economic and political matters. They didn't mind being "outcasts" from the supposedly enlightened environment that existed next to them. They preferred to suffer all the harsh decrees and persecutions, just to avoid being in close contact with them.

So it was with the brothers of Yosef, the brothers

of the viceroy of Egypt. They could have taken very high and esteemed positions. But they preferred being detested by their neighbors, just so they won't have to mix in with the life of Egyptian society.

How did they prepare themselves for coming to their new country? הַיְהוּדָה שָׁלַח לִפְנֵי אֶל יוֹסֵף לְהוֹרֹת? – “He sent Yehudah in front of him, to Yosef, to instruct before him to Goshen.”² *Chazal* say that the “instruction” in this *pasuk* is Torah instruction. In other words, Torah learning. As Rashi explains, Yehudah was sent ahead to set up a study house from which Torah instruction will emanate. So we see that *Yaakov Avinu* was not willing to go to a new place until they set up a *beis midrash* there.

Ostensibly, the normal way would be to first choose a good place to live, in a good environment, and then to move in, and the next morning, to ask where the *shul* is. Because on moving day, who has time for such things...

But *Yaakov Avinu* didn't do it that way. Just like people won't move into a new home unless they make sure in advance that it has water and electricity and everything else essential, so *Yaakov Avinu* treated his spiritual needs. For him, a *beis midrash* was as essential as water. He won't move in, he won't go down to Egypt, until a *beis midrash* is ready.

All this teaches us that Torah learning and *mitzvah* observance are not just lofty and important matters. They define our lives in the most basic way. Torah is the central point to which everything we do and think is focused. This is why our forefather made sure that first of all, there should be a *beis midrash*, because this is what life is. ●

1 *Bereishis* 33:14.

2 *Ibid* 46:28.



Chanukah is our Legs

Chanukah and Purim can be described as the legs, the thighs, on which the edifice of Judaism stands. They correspond to the traits of *Netzach* and *Hod*. This is actually a Kabbalistic concept, but we will attempt to explain it on a simple level.

Parshas Vayishlach describes the struggle between Yaakov and Eisav. This struggle is ongoing. The dust they threw up while wrestling is still in the air. Yaakov prevailed in the end, but Eisav's ruling angel managed to injure Yaakov's thigh. Consequently, we are still limping on our thigh to this day. In other words, the rest of our spiritual limbs and organs are intact. The Jewish mind thinks pure thoughts, its eyes are free of improper sights, its mouth and ears avoid *lashon hara*, its heart is pure. But its legs sustained some damage. This requires explanation.

The course of the year has six *Yamim Tovim* that are called *Mikraei Kodesh*. There is the first and last day of Pesach, the first and last day of Sukkos, the one day of Rosh Hashanah and the one day of Shavu'os. In addition, we have Yom Kippur and Shabbos. All these are called *Moadim*.

What about Chanukah and Purim? They are not *Moadim* in the Biblical sense of the word. They are Rabbinic in origin, but they are still an intrinsic part of the system of *Moadim*.

On the *Moadim* there is a great downpour, a virtual deluge of *kedushah*, the purpose of which is to revolutionize our lives. We go through the holidays every year. But imagine what would happen if *chas v'shalom* a year would go by without Shavu'os or Yom Kippur. We could not continue to exist!

The *kedushah* of the Biblically-ordained *Moadim* separates us from *melachah*, from creative work, from all the things we need to do in order to physically sustain ourselves in the material world. The *Moadim*

lift us above the world, above *derech hateva*.

Chanukah, too, comes to revolutionize our lives, but in a different way.

First let us understand what we are lacking without Chanukah and Purim.

At the end of each of the above-mentioned *Moadim*, the sun sets, it grows dark, and we recite *Havdalah*, in which we declare that until now, we were in a world of *kedushah*, and now we are entering the mundane world. We are leaving a world of true Jewishness, of supernatural connection and closeness to *Hashem*, and now we will live the coming days on a worldly plane.

Yes, we wish to take the *kedushah* of the sublime days with us into our mundane lives, and indeed this is the goal. But how does it happen, practically speaking? The next day we wake up in the morning and start running the race of daily life again. How do we hold onto the *kedushah* of the *Moadim*?

This is exactly the problem with how we practice Judaism. It lacks proper support to hold it up. The *Moadim* give us a golden opportunity to experience the beautiful, ideal picture of *Yiddishkeit*. But it all falls down when the weekdays start again. It lacks a proper foundation to hold it up.

In other words, it lacks "legs" on which to stand.

That's why we have Chanukah, which is the "legs" of the edifice of Judaism. Chanukah is able to accomplish this because it is a *Moed*, but at the same time, it is also mundane weekdays, on which we may perform all manners of work. This is an amazing combination.

Chanukah is all about the struggle between Yisrael and Greece. The Greeks are descendants of Yefes and they value beauty above all. *Chazal* say that the ancient Greek tongue was a beautiful language. Beauty is tied up with nature, with the natural world.

Nature is tremendously beautiful.

The Greeks claim all the beauty and all the benefits of the natural world for themselves. They concede pure spirituality to the descendants of Shem, to the Jews, but cannot accept that we take part in the material world as well. How can we eat meat and drink wine on our holy days? How can we wear fine clothing on Shabbos? How can the *Kohen Gadol* dress in magnificent garments when he serves in the *Beis Hamikdash*? What has all that to do with the spiritual heritage of Shem??

The Torah outlook is that we should live *kedushah* fully, with every fiber of our being and every limb of our body. We should serve *Hashem* with fine clothing, with food and drink. We should bring *kedushah* into the realm of natural living. We don't sacrifice our life for *kedushah*, we rather bring *kedushah* into every aspect of our life.

Just as the Greek outlook seeks to separate the holy (which belongs to the Jews) from the mundane (which belongs to the Greeks) so it seeks to separate the holy days from the mundane weekdays. To the Greeks it is unacceptable to try and bring *kedushah* into the secular workdays because the two don't mix. It's okay to have holy days, but when they're over, they're over.

And so it was until the *Chashmona'im* came along. They innovated a new type of *Mo'ed*. A new concept. It goes like this: The natural world on its own is meaningless to us; we can and should live on a supernatural level even within this world. A Jew lives a "natural" life that is, in fact, a life of *kedushah*. In other words, you can make a *Mo'ed* on an ordinary weekday. And so they did. It is called Chanukah.

The mundane can be sanctified through the power of *mesirus nefesh*. This may be understood as follows. A person has a lot of natural desires, but the strongest desire of all is the will to live. A person will give anything he has to save his life.

However, there is one thing that is more precious to a Jew than anything else. It is even more important than his very life. This expresses *mesirus nefesh*. Giving one's life means breaking the force of nature. *Mesirus nefesh* means a person is not living within the bounds of the natural world; he is above it. This is the power of the *Chashmona'im*, who, through their *mesirus nefesh*, got rid of the Greeks.

The *Chashmona'im* did not kill out the Greeks. Rather, they created a new reality. Their new reality is that every Jew, through *mesirus nefesh*, can live a life of *kedushah* even on the mundane weekdays. This is the message of Chanukah.

This gives us "legs" to stand on. We can carry over the sublime *kedushah* of the *Mo'adim*, which represent true Jewish living, into the ordinary workdays. We have a solid base to support us.

We all feel a pull to the beautiful things that the world has to offer. We appreciate wisdom, we are interested in scientific and technological developments, we enjoy beautiful music, we want to know what's happening in the world and follow the news. All this beauty belongs essentially to Yefes.

As long as we are attached to it, we are bound to fall down. We may spend many long hours in the *beis midrash*, and even in the *Beis Hamikdash*, but when we come out, which must happen sooner or later, we fall. Why? Because we don't have "legs." When we leave the place of *kedushah*, we have nothing to support us.

Mesirus nefesh, Chanukah, is the answer. Even when we are living and acting in the mundane world, we are not truly attached to it. We don't belong to it. We live a supernatural life of *kedushah* even in the workaday world.

We just light a candle and banish the darkness of this world. In a life of *kedushah* we will find every pleasure. We will lack nothing. ●