

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
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*Vayigash*





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## Parshat Vayigash

### The Advantages of *Bitachon*

The Brisker Rav (the Gri'z) *zt'l* married into a very wealthy family, and his father-in-law gave him an entire street in Warsaw for his dowry.

But this gift came along with many obligations (such as: finding tenants, collecting rent, hiring superintendents to maintain the houses etc.) and all this was taking him away from Torah study. The Brisker Rav decided he would hire an agent to sell all the houses for him.

But then WWI began and the Brisker Rav had to run away. When he returned to Warsaw, the agent was no longer alive. The Brisker Rav went to the government archives to see what happened to his property. He discovered that the agent wasn't honest and had put the street with all its houses on his own name.

To encourage himself, the Brisker Rav reviewed *Shaar HaBitachon* from the *Chovas HaLevavos* many times. He said, "I used to think that someone who owns a street in Warsaw is wealthy. Now I know that someone who studies *Shaar HaBitachon* tens of times is wealthy, because no one in the world is happier than someone who has *bitachon*."

When one has *bitachon* he should feel in his heart as though Hashem is telling him

that everything will work out. As the Rabbeinu B'Chaya writes, אשר לבו חזק בבטחונו כאילו הבטיחו השם יתברך, "One's heart is strong with his trust in Hashem, as if Hashem promised him."

If Hashem would promise someone that He will help him, the person would be very happy. He wouldn't have any worries at all. That is how we should feel when we have *bitachon*.

A person who lives with this belief is definitely the happiest person in the world.

A wagon driver once told the Chofetz Chaim, "My horse, which was my sole source for *parnassah*, died. Now I don't know what will be."

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "If your horse was your source of *parnassah*, then I agree with you that you should cry." But when one knows that Hashem is our source of *parnassah*, there is never reason to panic. Hashem, who supported you until now can continue doing so. There's no need to worry.

It states, ויכלכל... לחם לפי המדף (47:12).<sup>1</sup> The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz *zt'l* explained, לחם, one's *parnassah*, לפי המדף, is in accordance to how much one looks up to Hashem (מדף means "looking." See *Megillah* 14, "מטייפין").

1. Literally this means that Yosef sent food to his brothers and to their families based on how many children they had, and how many mouths there was to feed.

In a second explanation, the Divrei Yisrael explains להם לפי הטף means we should trust in Hashem for *parnassah* like children trust their parents to support them.

Children are certain their parents will support them. They have no worries at all. That is how we should trust in Hashem.<sup>2</sup>

A priest once told the people of his town that they shouldn't buy alcoholic beverages in Jewish bars. At that time, most Yidden's *parnassah* was from *krechmers*, bars, and the priest's decree jeopardized their *parnassah*.

One Shabbos, the Yeitav Lev *zt'l* came to that village. On Motzei Shabbos, the bartenders told him how they lost their *parnassah* because the gentiles stopped buying from them, by the priest's orders.

The Yeitav Lev replied, "נפש refers to the Yidden, and נפשות refers to Goyim. Because it states (46:26), כל הנפש הבאה, ליעקב... 'All the souls that were coming with Yaakov...' Rashi writes, 'Esav was only six people, and it states נפשות ביתו, in plural tense, because they served many gods. Yaakov had seventy people and the Torah calls them נפש, in singular tense,

because they served one G-d.' We learn from this Rashi that נפשות are the goyim, and נפש are the Yidden.

We say the *brachah* בורא נפשות רבות. This is referring to the gentiles, who are called נפשות in plural. The *brachah* says that Hashem created many gentiles והסרוגן, and they have needs. The purpose is להחיות בהם נפש, to give *chiyus* and *parnassah* for Yidden, who are called נפש. But since in this village, they aren't helping you in any way, they don't have any reason to live." After saying this, a plague broke out in that city, and hundreds of gentiles died.

The governor of the area launched an investigation to find the source of the plague. They investigators reported that the townspeople used to drink alcoholic beverages, which cleaned their systems from bacteria. But lately, they aren't drinking so much, and therefore they became ill.

The governor investigated the reason they stopped buying alcohol, and when he heard that the priest forbade them from buying from Jewish bars, the governor called him to trial, and the priest was punished with death.

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2. The Sefer HaBris writes, "And now, wise reader, it isn't proper that an intelligent person like yourself should toil so hard for *parnassah*. Be strong in your *bitachon*, trust in Hashem, and He will support you... You shouldn't be working from morning to night, putting your life in danger traveling overseas or through forests... Certainly, you shouldn't seek *parnassah* in forbidden ways, *chas veshalom*... But then again, one must do *something*. As Chazal say, 'Perhaps a person can do nothing at all, and still earn his livelihood? No. The Torah says, בכל אשר תעשה, Hashem's blessings are dependent on one's deeds.' Therefore, trust in Hashem, and He will bless your efforts."

### What Do You Do?

The Beis HaLevi met one of his students. The Beis HaLevi said, "It is so long since I've seen you. וואס מאכסטו?"<sup>3</sup>

The student replied that *baruch Hashem* he's married, and he told him where he lives...

The Beis HaLevi asked him again, וואס מאכסטו?"

This time, the student told him about his children.

The Beis HaLevi asked him a third time, וואס מאכסטו? The student told the Beis HaLevi about his business and financial success. The Beis HaLevi replied, "Until now you told me what Hakadosh Baruch Hu does, because Hashem makes *shidduchim*, and Hashem gives children and *parnassah*. But I didn't ask you that. I asked וואס מאכסטו, 'What do you do?' I wanted to hear what you learn, the mitzvos you perform, etc., because that is what you do. And you didn't answer that question at all."

The *sefer* "Devarim Achadim" explains that Yosef told his brothers (46:33), והיה כי יקרא לכם פרעה ואמר מה מעשיכם ואמרתם אנשי כי יקרא לכם פרעה ואמר מה מעשיכם ואמרתם אנשי "When Pharaoh asks you 'What do you do?' tell him that you are shepherds..." Yosef was concerned that when Pharaoh asks them what they do, they will tell him about their Torah and *tefillah*, because, as the Bes HaLevi clarified, solely that is what man does. Everything else Hashem does. But Yosef knew that Pharaoh wouldn't understand

that, so he told them to tell him about their *parnassah*, that they are shepherds.

Nevertheless, Pharaoh could tell by their unenthusiastic response that their work as shepherds isn't what they truly consider as their achievements.

Then Pharaoh spoke with Yaakov, and Yaakov Avinu said (47:9), מעט ורעים היו ימי שני היי. He was bemoaning that he didn't serve Hashem as much as he felt he should. Pharaoh realized that he doesn't speak the same "language" as Yosef's family. They have a different idea of what is called accomplishing than he has. He told Yosef, אביך ואחייך באו אליך, "Your family came to you, but not to me, because they don't understand me and I don't understand them."

After the World War II, Reb Moshe Shneider *zt'l* was the *rosh yeshiva* of a large yeshiva in London. He asked one of the students to collect money for the yeshiva, because the financial situation of the yeshiva was very tight.

The *bachur* tried going door-to-door, but he didn't earn any money. Some didn't answer the door. Those who answered said they give *tzedakah* to other places. Some people insulted him. One home had a sign, "Shnorrers and dogs prohibited."

The *bachur* returned to the yeshiva and sat down to study Torah. He didn't want to tell the *rosh yeshiva* that his venture was a total failure. The *rosh yeshiva*

3. Literally, וואס מאכסטו means, "What do you do?" It can also mean, "What's new by you?"

called for him, and said, "I have to thank you for your efforts."

The *bachur* replied, "There is nothing to thank me for. I didn't do anything."

The *rosh yeshiva* replied, "We do our *hishtadlus*, and Hashem sends the *brachah*. You made *hishtadlus*, and a wealthy person just promised to give the yeshiva 25 sterling! (which was a lot of money in those days. (Told by Reb

Moshe Shternbuch Shlita, *Taam v'Daas*, vol.1, p.206).

The Gemara (*Taanis* 22) implies that Eliyahu HaNavi is in the marketplace. Why should he be there? The Sfas Emes (*Berzhan, Noach*) explains, "People are very busy making a living, and it is hard for them to focus on the truth that everything is by Hashem's *hashgachah*. Eliyahu is in the market place to inspire people to remember this."

### Judging Others Favorably

There are times we think someone is against us, cruel to us, etc. but it is very possible that we are seeing things incorrectly. If we could see matters correctly, we might see that it was all just a misconception.

Yosef's brothers realized that they misjudged him, and that frightened them. They used to think Yosef was a *rodef* who wanted to harm them, and felt it was within their rights to sell him as a slave.

But then Yosef told them (45:3), *אני יוסף...*, "I am Yosef... The brothers weren't able to reply because they were frightened from him." The Maharal translates the words, *כי נבהלו מפניו*, literally: "They were

frightened by his *face*."<sup>4</sup> They saw a new face, a new Yosef. They saw him now, for the first time, as he truly is.

At first, the brothers thought Yosef was a *rodef*, someone who desires to harm them. But now they saw that they erred. Yosef could have easily harmed them because he was the ruler of Mitzrayim and they were at his mercy. The brothers realized they were mistaken, and were frightened by the magnitude of their error.

We too, often err when we judge people. They often have a very different "face" than how we perceive them. Acknowledge this folly and start judging people favorably.

### The Power of Resolve

In this week's *parashah*, Yehudah explained to Yosef why he's pleading for Binyamin more than the other brothers. Yehudah said, *כי עבדך ערב את הנער*, "It is

because your servant guaranteed the lad..." (44:32).

Rashi explains, "If you will ask why I'm pleading for Binyamin more than all the

4. Because if the *pasuk* means that they were afraid of *him*, it would say, *כי נבהלו ממנו*.

others? They aren't so connected, but I am bound, with a strong knot, to be banned from both worlds [if I don't return with Binyamin]."

As it states in last week's *parashah*, Yehudah told Yaakov (43:9), אנכי אערבנו מידי תבקשנו אם לא הביאתיו אליך והצגתיו לפניך כל הימים, "I will be his guarantor.... If I don't return him... to you, I will be in sin before you forever" and then Yaakov agreed to send him.

Why did Yehudah's promise convince Yaakov to send Binyamin? If Yehudah failed in the mission, Yaakov would have even greater distress because Binyamin will be lost and also Yehudah will be in *niduy* (banned). How did Yehudah's words convince Yaakov to send Binyamin?

The Avnei Nezer *zt'l* explains that every person has amazing strengths within him. It is known and documented that people have outstanding capabilities during emergencies. Even a weak person can perform deeds that the strongest people in the world can't do. People are known to lift cars, jump from great heights and run far distances, when they are in danger. They find strengths they previously didn't know they had. Those powers were always in them, they just came to the fore in the time of need.

#### ועתה - Focus on the Present

Chazal say ועתה refers to *teshuvah*. When one does *teshuvah*, it is important to focus on ועתה, the present.

The past pulls people down and depresses them. Furthermore, thinking about the past errors, generally causes

Yehudah accepted on himself a ban, a *niduy*, if he fails to return with Binyamin. When Yaakov heard this, he knew that Yehudah will succeed in bringing Binyamin back home. A *niduy* is a very serious matter. It meant that Yehudah would be banned from the *yeshivah shel maalah* as well (as the Gemara says in *Sotah* 7). Since Yehudah's future was at stake, Yaakov knew that he will use all his revealed and latent powers to achieve his goal. And indeed, he succeeded.

Similarly, it states (*Tehillim* 119:106), נשבעתי ואקימה לשמר משפטי צדקך, "I swore... to keep Your mitzvos..."

How does the שבועה help a person keep the mitzvos? One is obligated to do the mitzvos before the *shevuah*, so how does swearing help?

The answer is, success is dependent on how sincerely one desires to do the deed. The stronger the resolve, the greater the chances are of his success. The stringent obligation to uphold a *shvuah* increases one's resolve and thereby ensures that he will perform the mitzvos.

When Yaakov heard that Yehudah was daring himself with a *niduy*, he understood that his resolve was firm, and he will succeed in returning with Binyamin.

those errors to be repeated in the future. Therefore, the path for *teshuvah* is ועתה, to focus on making the present better and to forget the past.

Yosef told his brothers (45:5), ועתה אל תעצבו ואל יחר בעיניכם כי מכרתם אתי הנה, "and



now, don't be sad, and don't let this anger you, that you sold me here..."

Rebbe Yechezkel of Shinov *zt'l* says that Yosef told them, ועתה אל תעצבו. "Don't rebuke yourselves for selling me, and don't dwell on the past, because that will only hold you back from improving. Rather, ועתה, think about the present, ואל תעצבו, and don't be sad."<sup>5</sup>

One *bachur* was very disheartened by the *aveiros* he committed, and he spoke with the Leiv Simchah (of Gur) *zt'l* about it. The Leiv Simchah told him that according to the Ramban, Yaakov Avinu never found out how Yosef ended up in Mitzrayim. Yaakov never asked Yosef, and Yosef never told him. Because the past isn't important. What was, was. What's important is to make the future better.

The Lev Simchah advised this *bachur* to ignore the past, because what was, was, and the path of *teshuvah* is ועתה, to make the future better.

The Yerushalmi (*Pe'ah* 8:8) tells that Reb Yochanan and Reish Lakish went to bathe in the hot springs of Teveria, and met with a pauper asking for a donation. They said, "When we return from the baths, we will give you." When they returned, the pauper was already dead. He died from hunger. Reb Yochanan and Reish Lakish said, "We didn't merit taking care of you when you were alive, we will take care of you now, after your death."

When they were preparing him for burial, they found a wallet filled with money on his body.

The Lev Simchah of Gur *zt'l* spoke about this episode, and said that it demonstrates how the holy Amoraim would focus on the present, rather than to mope over the past. If they moped or were distraught that they caused this person's death, they wouldn't have the willpower to bury him. they would live their entire life with a guilty conscience that they caused

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5. Rebbe Shalom of Koidenov *zt'l* said that *teshuvah* must be with a broken heart (לב נשבר) but not with depression (עצבות). The difference between a broken heart and depression is that when one has a broken heart, he feels that he is worse than everyone in the world. When one is depressed, he is angry at the entire world.

The hint is in this week's *parashah*. Yosef told his brothers, ועתה אל תעצבו ואל יחר בעיניכם, if you won't have *atzvus*, then you won't be angry with others.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* once rebuked his son, and told him to be happy. The son asked, "Why do you rebuke me specifically about being happy? There are so many other things that I do wrong?"

The Beis Aharon replied, "All other *aveiros* and bad *middos*, you know that they are bad, and you will eventually repent. But people don't recognize how severe *atzvus* is, and how it draws a person down into the mud. Therefore, I rebuke you specifically in this regard."

The Beis Aharon said, "*Atzvus* isn't an *aveirah*, but it pulls people down more than the greatest *aveirah*. *Simchah* isn't a *mitzvah*, but it raises a person higher than the greatest *mitzvah*."

someone's death. But because they focused on what they can do at the present, they discovered that he had plenty of money, and it wasn't their fault that he died. This pauper preferred to die than to spend his own money.

It states (47:8-9), ויאמר פרעה אל יעקב כמה ימי, שני חייד ויאמר ימי שני... מעט ורעים היו... "Pharaoh asked Yaakov, 'How old are you?' Yaakov replied... they are few and bad years..."

There are thirty-three words in these two *pesukim*, and Chazal tell us that Yaakov Avinu died when he was thirty-three years younger than his father Yitzchak because he complained before Pharaoh. (Yitzchak lived until 180 and Yaakov until 147.)

Not all the words of the *pesukim* were Yaakov's. Among them is Pharaoh's question, "How old are you?"

Why was Yaakov punished for Pharaoh's words too?

The *Mefarshim* answer that Pharaoh was

shocked by Yaakov's elderly appearance, and this caused Pharaoh to ask him his age. Yaakov explained to him that he isn't so old, only the *tzaros* of his life made him age early. Yaakov was punished for Pharaoh's question because his appearance prompted it.

Yaakov was punished for complaining, and for appearing old. What lesson can we take from this? If we will train ourselves to focus on the present, and to let bygones be bygones, it will be easier for us to live without complaining, and to live happily without appearing old and worn out.

The Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* once said: "It states (*Vayikra* 6:6), אש תמיד תוקד, על המזבה לא תכבה. This means a fire to serve Hashem should always be burning על המזבה, in one's heart. לא תכבה, even if he committed sins, those sins shouldn't discourage him, and cool off his fire and inspiration. He should continue serving Hashem. Upholding the Torah is dependent on this attitude."

### *Kibud Av ve'Em*

*Targum Yonoson* (46:29) writes that when Yaakov met with Yosef, he didn't realize that it was Yosef. He thought it was a king or a high-ranking officer, so he bowed down to him. Because he bowed to Yosef, Yosef lost years of his life.

Yosef was supposed to live until 120, but since his father bowed to him, he was niftar at 110.

In contrast, someone who honors his

parents will merit *arichus yamim*, a long and prosperous life.

The *pasuk* (46:29) states, ויפל על צוואריו ויבך, על צוואריו עוד, "Yosef fell on his father's neck, and he cried on his neck copiously." According to the *Targum Yonoson*, Yosef was crying because he lost years of his life.

Rashi writes, "But Yaakov didn't fall on Yosef's neck and he didn't kiss him. Chazal say that he was saying Shema."

The question is, if it was time to say the Shema, why wasn't Yosef saying Shema, as well?<sup>6</sup>

The Maharal (*Gur Aryeh*) answers that it wasn't time to read Shema, rather Yaakov Avinu's heart was filled with love of Hashem, and he wanted to take the opportunity to express his emotions by saying the Shema.

As the Maharal writes, "When Yaakov saw his son Yosef ruling like a king, his heart became filled with love and fear to Hashem, and he saw how Hashem's ways are good and perfect, and that He gives good reward for those who fear Him. It is the way of the righteous that when something good happens to them, they attach themselves to Hakadosh Baruch Hu because of the good and truth that Hashem did with them. The Shema discusses Hashem's kingship and oneness, and our love to Him. It was proper to say Shema when Yosef came to him, after all the distress he had suffered the past. He merited seeing Yosef as king, and he loved Hakadosh Baruch Hu Who did this for him, and he accepted on himself Hashem's kingship, and to love and fear Hashem. This is a correct explanation, for those who understand."

The Steipler *zt'l* (*Birchas Peretz, Vayigash*) asks that also according to this commentary we don't understand why Yosef didn't say Shema. Although it

wasn't the time to say Shema, Yosef should have expressed his love to Hashem by saying Shema, as his father was doing.

The Steipler *zt'l* answers that Yosef was doing the mitzvah of *kibud av ve'em*, and it wasn't time for him to be involved in any other activity. Yaakov was allowed to use the opportunity to express his love and fear to Hashem, but Yosef had to focus on the mitzvah at hand – the mitzvah of *kibud av ve'em*.

In תש"ה a *bachur* came to Eretz Yisrael by himself. His parents arrived two years later, in תש"ז. The *bachur* wanted to help his parents find a place to live and to help them find *parnassah*, because by this time the *bachur* already learned the language and he knew the culture, and how things work in Eretz Yisrael. He asked his rebbe, Reb Eizik Sher *zt'l* whether he should devote himself to helping his parents get settled; it would take away at least two weeks from his learning in yeshiva.

Reb Eizik Sher didn't know the answer, because the Shulchan Aruch HaRav says that someone who has potential to succeed in Torah shouldn't stop studying, not even to perform mitzvos that no one else can do, other than him, and this *bachur* had potential to become great in Torah. (Indeed, today he is one of the *gedolim*.)

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6. The Maharal writes, "They ask, why didn't Yosef say Shema, since this was the time for Shema? It is difficult (a *dochek*) to answer that Yosef read the Shema earlier or later, because those who are *zariz* (swift with the mitzvos) they all say Shema at the same time."

Reb Eizik advised him to ask the Chazon Ish *zt'l*. The *bachur* asked the Chazon Ish his question (without mentioning the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*). The Chazon Ish replied, "It is natural that a child should do this for his parents" (*מעשה איש* Vol.2 p.184).

Reb Yaakov Halperin *zt'l* noticed that a great *talmid chacham* in Eretz Yisrael was sad, and he asked him about that. The *talmid chacham* replied that his parents just came from Lodz, and he has to support them. But he hardly has money for himself, and he doesn't have money for his parents.

Reb Yaakov Halprin replied, "I will support your parents, but on condition that I will earn the reward for the mitzvah."

The *talmid chacham* didn't know how to respond. He didn't want to lose reward for the mitzvah. "I need to think it over," he replied.

He asked the Chazon Ish *zt'l*. The Chazon Ish told him, "What's the question? Of course, you should accept Reb Yaakov's offer. And if you lose the

reward for the mitzvah, so you lose it. Know, one must be ready to even jump into Gehinom to honor one's parents."

Then the Chazon Ish smiled and added, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu has enough reward to give both to you and also to Reb Yaakov..." (*מעשי איש* Vol 2. p.181).

There is this famous story of a father who wrote a letter to his son who was learning in Reb Chaim Brisker's yeshiva that he wants him to return home. The student asked Reb Chaim Brisker what he should do, because his father didn't attach money for the trip. Reb Chaim told him, "You aren't obligated to pay for the trip home, but that doesn't exempt you from your obligation to walk home, because walking doesn't cost money..."

Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* wrote in a letter to his son, Reb Avraham Shmuel Binyamin *z'l*, "My dear son, why isn't *yiras shamayim* upon you? When you write a letter to me (with *chidushei Torah*), send a greeting to your mother, and do the mitzvah of *kibud em*. From now on, send a greeting to your mother..."

### **Yesurim - for one's benefit**

In a concentration camp, Reb Efraim Shwartz *z'l* was standing in line together with hundreds of other Yidden. Reb Efraim saw that the extremely thin were sent to the left, and those who had some flesh (albeit minimal) were sent to the right. Reb Efraim was thin, all skin and bones. When it was his turn, he took a deep breath and put out his chest to appear healthy, but the Nazi signaled him

to the left. Reb Efraim fell before the Nazi, and cried and pleaded before him. He even stamped his feet as a child, to no avail. He was sent to the left.

That situation turned to be for his benefit. A few hours later he heard that whoever was sent to the right was killed. The Americans were approaching, and the Nazis wanted to kill as many Yidden as possible. They killed the healthier

Yidden first, assuming that the weaker ones will die on their own.

That is how Reb Efraim's life was saved.

Often matters seem bad, but they are really the beginning of something very good. There are several examples of this principle.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 60:) talks about someone's field that was flooded and all his crops were ruined. But now his field is irrigated and fertilized, and it will produce better crops in the upcoming years. So, in a way, something very good happened to him.

The Amud HaAvadoh told the following story: Farmers who raise livestock – like cattle and horses – know that they must prepare plenty of hay ahead of time, during the fall season. In the winter the earth is frozen, covered with snow, there is no hay in the fields, and the animals can't pasture.

One rancher owned one hundred oxen, and he stored away hay for them. After Succos, fifty oxen died. He said that it was for the best. Eventually, he saw that it was indeed so. He accidentally only prepared sufficient hay for fifty oxen. If he had one hundred oxen, he would have used up all the fodder in the middle of the winter, and then all one hundred of them would die from hunger. Fifty oxen

died, so fifty could survive the winter. His loss was for his benefit.<sup>7</sup>

It states (45:27), וירא את העגלות אשר שלח יוסף, לשאת אותו ותחי רוח יעקב אביהם, “He saw the wagons that Yosef sent to carry him, and Yaakov's spirit was rejuvenated.” The Shem MiShmuel (p.299) explains that עגלות comes from the word עיגול, round, alluding to a wagon's round wheels. The wheel goes down, but then it goes back up again. Each *yeridah* (descent of the wheel) leads to the next *aliyah* (ascent). The wise view every descent as a step towards the next ascent. They aren't frightened by the difficulties they endure in life, because they know something very good will happen to them, because of these events. Yosef was hinting to his father that although they are going down to Mitzrayim, and that this exile is the beginning of all future exiles, nevertheless, it is an ascent. As it states, וירא את העגלות... לשאת אותו, the purpose of the descent is לשאת to rise up to higher levels. ותחי רוח יעקב אביהם, Yaakov's spirits were raised. He believed that goodness would emerge from his descent.

We say, ויהיו רחמך מתגללים על עם קדשך, “Your compassion should “roll” onto your holy nation.” I heard from a *talmid chacham* that we are requesting that the wheels that turned down should “roll” back up again, and everything should become good for the Jewish nation.

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7. The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 26) discusses a pin that has a diamond inserted on the top. This type of jewelry reminds us that sometimes there is a pin that pricks and hurts, but there's a diamond there. Right now matters don't seem to be good for you, but you may discover a diamond.

It states (46:2), ויאמר אלקים לישראל במראות הלילה... אל תירא מרדה מצרימה כי לגוי גדול אשימך שם, "Hashem said to Yisrael (Yaakov Avinu) in a vision at night... Don't be afraid to go down to Mitzrayim, because I will make you into a great nation there..." Both nighttime and dreams signify the hardships of *galus*. The Kli Yakar explains that Hashem was telling Yaakov that he shouldn't fear the afflictions of *galus* because they will turn around for his benefit. As it states (*Shemos* 1:12), וכאשר יענו אותם בן ירבה, "As they afflicted them, so did they increase..."

The Be'er Mayim Chaim *zt'l* (ד"ה או יאמר) (ויזבח) lists four reasons for afflictions (*yesurim*). [1] To increase one's portion in Olam Haba.<sup>8</sup> [2] *Yesurim* liberates him from being punished in Gehinom.<sup>9</sup> [3] It is a wake-up call, rousing people to *teshuvah*. [4] The fourth reason for *yesurim* (which is the topic of our discussion) is because something very good will come from this bad. It looks bad now, but it is the beginning of something very good.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim elaborates on this fourth point. He writes, "Sometimes, Hashem decrees good, and when the

8. *Yesurim* are a quick way to become close to Hashem, but one has to know how to accept the *yesurim* properly.

We will express this with a *mashal*:

The purpose of a car is to help people get to their destination quicker. A car is a much faster means of commuting than walking. Nevertheless, one must know how to drive a car, and one must know the rules of the road. Otherwise, he might cause more harm than good.

The *nimshal* is Hashem gives tests and challenges. If one accept them in the right way, he will become close to Hashem through them. But if he doesn't react to the challenges properly, it will distance him from Hashem.

David HaMelech said (*Tehillim* 49:5), אפתח בכינור חידתי, "I will tell my riddle with my harp ..." but this chapter doesn't tell any riddles.

Reb Yohonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* said that a great riddle is found in this chapter. It discusses the riddle of the world, that we see some people becoming wealthy and successful, while others don't share this same fate. Why do people suffer? What is the purpose of pain and distress? The answer is בכינור. The decibel of a harp (and all string instruments) is dependent on how strong one pulls on the strings. Similarly, hardships stretches us, ripens us, and makes us better people.

9. The *Be'er Mayim Chaim* elaborates, "One moment in Gehinom is much worse than all punishments of this world. Because punishments of this world are for the body, while the punishments of Gehinom are for both the *neshamah* and for the body... Chazal say that our fire is 1/60th of the fire of Gehinom. Everyone understands the great pain of being thrown into fire of this world, we can only imagine the intense fire of Gehinom. Therefore, a thousand punishments in this world is certainly better for him than one punishment in Gehinom." Thus, the *yesurim* in this world are beneficial, because suffering here, saves us from much greater suffering there.

good comes to the person it first appears bad to him. But with time, he will see that it was good. He will discover a great favor happened to him. This happens many times."<sup>10</sup>

The Be'er Mayim Chaim clarifies that initially he will say, ברוך דין האמת, because presently it is bad for him. But eventually, when matters turn around and become good, he will say, ברוך הטוב והמטיב, thanking Hashem for His kindness.<sup>11</sup>

The Be'er Mayim Chaim shows that Yaakov Avinu's suffering when Yosef was away for twenty-two years is an example of this concept. As the Be'er Mayim Chaim writes, "Yaakov suffered immensely for twenty-two years when Yosef was taken away from him...<sup>12</sup> But this affliction turned around and proved to be very beneficial. Yosef became the king of Mitzrayim, and he supported Yaakov and his family during the famine. Furthermore, Yaakov was destined to descend to Mitzrayim 'in iron ropes,' as a slave (see Shabbos 89:)

but now he was brought to Mitzrayim with honor, summoned by Yosef, the king of Mitzrayim.

"Therefore, it was now time for Yaakov to say the *brachah* הטוב והמטיב to thank Hashem for the twenty-two years of affliction, because now he sees that that curse became a blessing, with very great benefits.

Therefore, it states (46:1), ויזבח זבחים, לאלקי אביו יצחק, "Yaakov sacrificed to the G-d of his father, Yitzchak." Specifically Yitzchak's name is mentioned, because Yitzchak represents harsh judgment, *midas hadin*. Now Yaakov thanked Hashem for the *midas hadin*, because he saw how even what he thought was bad was a step bringing him immense goodness.

#### Spiritual Gains

Yidden's primary desire is to earn spiritual gains, to become closer to Hashem, to learn more Torah, to perform more mitzvos, to do *chesed* with others,

10. The Be'er Mayim Chaim explains that Hashem could have given him goodness without dressing it in *yesurim*. Everything is by *hashgachah pratis*. Apparently, he needed the *yesurim* to free him from his sins. But in retrospect, one can look back and see that even the hardships was a step in the good that Hashem was giving him.

11. The Be'er Mayim Chaim teaches:

It states (Tehillim 118:21), אודך כי עניתני ותהי לי לישועה, "I praise You Hashem because You afflicted me, and I had a salvation." It begins with אודך כי עניתני, thanking Hashem for the affliction with the *brachah* ברוך דין האמת. And concludes, ותהי לי לישועה, thanking Hashem with ברוך הטוב והמטיב for the salvation that came from it.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim gives another explanation: אודך כי עניתני, if a person will praise Hashem for his afflictions, because he believes they are for his benefit (to free him from sin, or for some other reason), ותהי לי לישועה, this *emunah* will turn the affliction around, and it will become the beginning of something very good for him.

12. To atone for the twenty-two years he didn't practice *kibud av ve'em* (see *Megillah* 17).

etc. Often, the *yesurim* we go through seem to prevent us from accomplishing our goals. We think, wouldn't it be better if we didn't have all these *yesurim*, so we can serve Hashem better?

*Bederech Tzachus*,<sup>13</sup> the Meshech Chachmah shows that Yaakov Avinu was wondering what spiritual gain could possibly come from his *galus* to Mitzrayim.

He teaches this lesson from the *pasuk* (46:4), *אנכי ארד עמך... ויוסף ישית ידו על עיניך*, "I will go down with you [to Mitzrayim]... and Yosef will place his hand over your eyes." What does it mean that Yosef will cover Yaakov's eyes?

The Meshech Chachmah (ד"ה אנכי ארד) writes, "Yaakov may have been wondering, 'Why should I go down to Mitzrayim? What will come from it? How will this bring me to my *sheleimus*, perfection, in Hashem's service? Hashem told Avraham to go to Eretz Yisrael, the chosen land... But why should I go to Mitzrayim?' Hashem replied, *ויוסף*, the story that happened with Yosef, *ישית ידו על*

*עיניך*, will close your eyes so you won't ask questions on Hashem's *hashgachah*... Yosef became the ruler of Mitzrayim, and from his position he taught and influenced the Egyptians to live with righteousness. Let this story close your eyes so you won't ask questions, and so you won't try to understand Hashem's *hashgachah*. We say this commentary *bederech tzachus*."

Yosef might have also wondered what good can come from being separated from his holy father and brothers, brought to live alone among idol worshippers and sinners in Mitzrayim. But from that position Yosef accomplished so much. As the Meshech Chachmah writes, he influenced the entire country with true ideals. Hashem told Yaakov that this story should enable him to close his eyes and to rely blindly on Hashem's *hashgachah* and plan. It seems like no spiritual gains will come from it, but remember what happened to Yosef and know that very good things, even great spiritual gains, will come from your exile in Mitzrayim.<sup>14</sup>

13. *Bederech Tzachus* means not the literal meaning of the *pesukim*, but it is a true lesson we glean from the *pesukim*

14. *Shulchan Aruch* (61:5) states, "The custom is that one should cover his eyes with his hand when saying the first *pasuk* of Shema, so he won't look at matters that interfere with his concentration." This implies that one covers his eyes and he says, "Even when I don't understand, I close my eyes and believe that everything is for my good.

When he covers his eyes he says *ה' אלקינו ה' אחד*. This implies that also the attribute of kindness, which is represented by the name *ה'*, and also the attribute of Hashem's strict justice, represented by *אלקינו*, are both *אחד* – from the One Hashem, and they are both for our benefit. I close my eyes, because I don't understand how. I believe without seeing and without knowing how, but everything is for my good.

When Yosef met with Yaakov he fell on his father and cried. Rashi (46:29) writes, "But



**Hashem is Always with Us**

The Kli Yakar teaches that Hashem promised Yaakov that every moment the Yidden will be in Mitzrayim, Hashem will be there with them. They will never be in Mitzrayim alone. Hashem will come to Mitzrayim before them, and Hashem will leave after Yaakov and his family leaves. In that way, they won't be a moment in Mitzrayim without Hashem's presence.

The Kli Yakar proves this from the *pasuk* (46:2), אנכי ארד עמך מצרימה ואנכי אעלך, גם עליה, "I will go down to Mitzrayim with you and I will take you out, and I too will leave."

It first says אנכי ארד, that Hashem will go down to Mitzrayim, and then it states עמך, with you. This means Hashem will go to Mitzrayim first.

ואנכי אעלך גם עליה, "I will bring you out of Mitzrayim, and I will also go out." In these words, the implication is the opposite: First Hashem will bring Yaakov's family out of Mitzrayim, and then Hashem will leave. The result is that whenever the Jewish nation will be in Mitzrayim, Hashem will be there

with them, so they will never be alone in Mitzrayim.

The Kli Yakar compares this to someone who is about to swim in very deep water, but he is afraid to be there alone. So, he asks an expert swimmer to go into the water before him, and to leave after him, so every moment he will be in the deep water his partner will be there to save him. Similarly, Hashem promised that he will come to Mitzrayim before them and leave after them, so they will never be there alone.

Even when going through hard times, Hashem is always with us. We are never alone; we are never abandoned, because even afflictions are for our benefit.

The Meshech Chachmah teaches this lesson from the *pasuk* (46:2), ויאמר אלקים, לישראל במראות הלילה, "Hashem spoke with Yaakov in a vision at night." The Meshech Chachmah<sup>15</sup> writes, "In reference to Avraham and Yitzchak, the Torah never tells us about a prophecy at night, but by Yaakov (in this week's *parashah*, and also in *Vayeitzei* 28:11-12) the Torah tells about Yaakov Avinu's prophecies at night. Both these times, Yaakov Avinu was about to go down to

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Yaakov didn't fall on Yosef's neck, and he didn't kiss him. Chazal say that he was saying Shema." We can explain that when he met with Yosef, he recognized how all the bad and strife he endured were all for the good. Therefore, he considered this an ideal time to announce, ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, that even those matters that seem to be from אלקינו, Hashem's attribute of strict justice, were all Hashem's kindness.

15. Reb Yechezkel Abramsky *zt'l* very much appreciated this *vort* from the Meshech Chachmah, and he would repeat it each year *parashas Vayigash*, to whomever visited him that Shabbos.

*chutz le'aretz*. Hashem came to him at night to show him that even at night, which signifies the darkness of *galus*, the *Shechinah* will reside with the Jewish nation. As Chazal (*Megillah* 29) say, "They were exiled to Bavel, the *Shechinah* was with them..."

The Meshech Chachmah adds that this is the translation of the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 20), *יענה ה' ביום צרה ישגבר שם אלקי יעקב*, even when you are going through a *יום צרה*, hard times, recognize that *יענה*, Hashem will answer your *tefillos*, because Hashem is with you. *ישגבר אלקי יעקב*, the story that happened with Yaakov Avinu will lift your spirits and encourage you.

#### Everything is for the Good

It states (*Tehillim* 23:3), *ינהני במעגלי צדק*, "He leads me in a good way." *ינהני* can be read forwards or backwards (a palindrome). Because even when everything seems to be going in the wrong direction, it is always, *ינהני במעגלי צדק*, Hashem is leading us in the best ways.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 18) states, "The Yevanim forbade the Jewish people to say Hashem's name. When the Chashmonaim won the war, they made a *takanah* that Hashem's name should be written even in legal documents. They would write, 'In year such-and-such *ליודנן גדול לא"ל עליון* to Yochanan, the *cohen gadol* for the exalted G-d.' The *chachamim* heard about this and were displeased. They said, 'When the debt is paid, the *shtar* (document) will be thrown into the garbage and it will be a

disgrace for Hashem's name.' They therefore annulled this law."

We can ask, they could have written Hashem's name on money. (As in America, "In G-d we trust.") There is no fear that the money will be thrown in the garbage, because people don't throw out money.

We can answer: It isn't difficult to believe in Hashem when you have money. The trick is to believe in Hashem when you don't have money, and you need to take out a loan to survive. The trick is to believe even then that everything is led by Hashem, for his benefit.

Sometimes we don't see anything good coming from the *yesurim*, yet we believe that it was for our benefit. As the Be'er Mayim Chaim explained, they either bring us closer to Hashem, or free us from punishment in Gehinom, or arouse us to *teshuvah*, or they are the first step of something very good. *Yesurim* are always for our benefit.

They are never negative.

The Chofetz Chaim teaches: Yosef's brothers didn't understand why so many hardships were befalling them. The viceroy of Mitzrayim was speaking harshly to them, suspecting them of spying, and afterwards for theft, Shimon was imprisoned, and Binyamin was at risk of being imprisoned as well. But then Yosef told his brothers (45:3) *אני יוסף*, "I am Yosef!" and all their questions disappeared.

The Chofetz Chaim writes that Yidden in this long *galus* of two thousand years also have many questions. There are so many matters that don't seem to make sense to them. But the day will come when Hashem will announce, 'אני ה', and then all their questions will be resolved. They will understand how each episode in *galus* was for their benefit.

If we live presently with *emunah* that 'אני ה', we will be able to live with joy in the present, too.

Even when going through hard times, Hashem is with us, because everything is for our good.

#### Everything in its Destined Time

Chazal (*Megillah* 13:) say, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't bring injury onto Yisrael until the cure is first prepared." Every *yesurim* already has a *yeshuah* prepared, but one doesn't see, and one doesn't find it, until the right time comes.

The Yismach Yisrael (*Vayigash* 2) says that it often happens that a person is looking for something and then he sees that it was right next to him, all along. Similarly, when a person is waiting for a *yeshuah*, sometimes the salvation is all prepared for him and he just has to open his eyes to recognize it.<sup>16</sup> At first the salvation is concealed from him, because Heaven wanted this *yesurim* should

continue for a certain period of time, but when the time is up he immediately finds what he was looking for.

This happened to Yosef's brothers. They entered Mitzrayim through twelve different gates because they were searching for Yosef (see *Rashi Bereishis* 42:13). They were very motivated to find him and bring him home. Yet, when they stood before Yosef, they didn't consider that perhaps the ruler standing before them was Yosef. They heard that the viceroy of Mitzrayim was once a slave, but it didn't dawn on them that perhaps this was their brother. This is because the time wasn't ripe yet. Even when Yosef told his brothers, 'אני יוסף אחיכם אשר מכרתם אתי מצרימה, "I am Yosef your brother whom you sold to Mitzrayim..." the Midrash (93:8) states that they didn't believe him. Therefore, הראה להם שהוא מהול, "He showed them that he has a *bris milah*" (see *Rashi*) and then they believed him.

The Yismach Yisrael asks, how is *milah* a sign that he is Yosef? Arabs also do *milah*. The answer is, when the time was ripe everything made sense, and they knew it was Yosef.

Yosef told his brothers (45:9), מהרו ועלו אל אבי ואמרתם אליו כה אמר בנך יוסף שמני אלקים לארץ לכל מצרים, "Hurry and go up to my father and tell him, 'So says your son, Yosef.

16. The Yismach Yisrael bases this lesson on the following Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 53:14):

"Everyone is blind until Hakadosh Baruch Hu opens their eyes. As it states (*Bereishis* 21:19) 'Hashem opened [Hagar's] eyes and she saw there was a well...' The salvation can be before a person, but he won't see it until the time comes, and Hashem opens up your eyes.

Hashem made me the king over Mitzrayim..." He told the מַהְרֵי, to hurry. It was certainly proper to hurry to tell their father that Yosef was alive. Yaakov Avinu suffered all these years, and it would be a *chesed* and *kibud av* to tell him as quickly as possible that Yosef was alive and well.

Nevertheless, Yosef said (45:24), אֵל תִּרְגְּזוּ, בְּדֶרֶךְ, and Rashi explains אֵל תִּפְסְעוּ פְסִיעָה גְּסָה. This means they shouldn't return home with extra-large strides.

The Imrei Emes ז"ל explains that Yosef was telling them that although they should go home quickly, they shouldn't rush excessively. This is because everything has its time. There is a pre-destined time when Yaakov will hear the good news that Yosef is alive, and it is impossible to tell him that news earlier than the time destined from Above. Though they should rush home, there is no reason to rush extraordinarily. It will anyway be impossible to get home before the time planned by Hashem.

Related to this point, the Beis Yisrael ז"ל repeated the following story he heard from the chassid Reb Ben Tzion Ostraver ז"ל. Reb Ben Tzion said that he witnessed the story in Kotzk, when this story happened.

Chassidim were studying in the Kotzker Rebbe's ז"ל beis medresh when suddenly the Rebbe opened the door of his room and said, "Berke needs *rachamei shamayim*." Berke was Tamerl's husband, the renowned *baalas tzedakah*, who supported several chassidic Rebbes and

courts, including the court of Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa. The Kotzer Rebbe saw with *ruach hakadosh* that Berke was ill and needed *tefillos*.

A group of Kotzker chassidim immediately hitched a wagon and set off to Warsaw, to tell the Chidushei HaRim of Gur ז"ל and other tzaddikim, to daven for Berke.

Soon after they set out, one of the wagon wheels broke. They said this is from the *yetzer hara*, trying to prevent them from doing this important mitzvah. So they fixed the wheel and continued on their way. Then one of the horses died, but they continued on. When they came to Sakranovitz one of the chassidim became critically ill. They had to stop in Sakranovitz for a few days until he recuperated. When he was feeling better, they continued their journey.

They came to Praga, a village near Warsaw, and saw people returning home from Ber'ke's *levayah*. They were too late.

Reb Ben Tzion Ostraver ז"ל said that the people of Kotzk were discussing the Kotzker Rebbe's *ruach hakodesh*. He knew from the distance that Ber'ke was ill. But they said that even more, they saw Hakadosh Baruch Hu's *mofes*. Hashem showed them that if it is destined for someone to die, nothing will prevent it from happening. Hashem will arrange it so tzaddikim won't be told about it, so they won't be able to annul the decree with their *tefillos*. First a wheel broke, then a horse died, and then

one of the chassidim became ill. Because Hashem decided that it was time for Ber'ke to leave this world and nothing could change his fate.

Similarly, in this week's *parashah*, the brothers returned to rush home to tell Yaakov Avinu the good news that Yosef was still alive. Yosef warned them, אל תרנו בדרך, don't be too hasty because you anyway will not be able to change Hashem's plan. The moment it is destined for Yaakov to know, he will know, not a minute sooner. Yosef told them to go quickly, מהרו ועלו אל אבי (45:9) but don't go too quickly, because you will not be able to change the time that was decreed Above.

Reb Mordechai Weber takes a city bus every day to a beis medresh where he gives his daily *shiur*. One day, the bus arrived, but there was no room to board it. So he waited for the next bus, and the bus after that, but they were all full, and there was no room for him to get on. He was only able to board the fourth bus. He was wondering why this happened, since something like this never happened before.

He boarded the fourth bus and sat down next to a man who asked him to tell him stories about Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l*. (Years before, Reb Mordechai was a *gabai* for Rebbe Aharon of Belz.) Reb Mordechai told him that Rebbe Aharon once told them about a certain *kapo* (Jewish policeman, working for the Nazis

in the Holocaust) who was righteous. Most *kapos* were *resha'im*. They slandered the Jewish community. But this particular *kapo* passed the test, and never informed on and never harmed another Yid. Rebbe Aharon said that with self-sacrifice, this *kapo* would help Yidden, and Reb Aharon himself was also helped by that *kapo* several times.

A few days later, this man (who sat next to Reb Mordechai on the bus) called Reb Mordechai and invited him to his daughter's engagement party. Reb Mordechai thought it was strange that he was invited. They hardly knew each other and only spoke briefly on the bus, but he decided to please him and come to the *vort*.

At the *vort*, the father, "When this *shidduch* was suggested, many people discouraged me. They said, 'The grandfather was a *kapo* in the war. Who knows how many sins he committed, and how many people he hurt? It isn't proper to marry your daughter to his grandson...' But then I spoke with you and you told me about this *kapo* who didn't harm anyone, and he even helped them. I immediately agreed to consider the *shidduch*..."

That's when Reb Mordechai understood why three busses passed before he could get onto a bus. He had to be there to help this *shidduch* occur. Everything has a time, and everything is planned from Above.