



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת היום

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

פרשת ויגש תש"ע 5770 Parshas Vayigash

SECRET TO SURVIVAL

Ya'akov Avinu was finally on his way to be reunited with his beloved son, Yosef, who was residing – and reigning – in the Land of Mitzrayim (Egypt). As much as he anticipated the meeting, however, Ya'akov was still afraid of leaving his homeland.

Hashem appeared to Ya'akov to reassure him that eventually his progeny would return to Eretz Yisrael. This communication took place in a manner not found with the other *Avos* (Patriarchs).

The verse in this week's *parshah* (*Bereishis* 46:2) tells us that Hashem appeared to Ya'akov in "visions of the night"; the other *Avos* were visited primarily by day. The Meshech Chochmah (*parshas Vayigash*) explains the significance and the powerful message contained therein.

(It was known that R' Chatzkel Abramsky derived particular enjoyment from the *sefer* Meshech Chochmah. As recorded in *P'ninei R' Yechezkel*, every Shabbos he would learn through whatever the Meshech Chochmah had written for that week's *parshah*, explaining that it constituted his "Oneg Shabbos" [*Shabbos* "treat"]. Concerning the following commentary of the Meshech Chochmah, he made the unusual declaration that the Meshech Chochmah was undoubtedly imbued with a special measure of *ruach hakodesh* [Divine inspiration] to arrive at this explanation.)

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Our Sages liken exile to a long night. Ya'akov now stood on the cusp of entering into *galus*. The intent of Hakadosh Boruch Hu's appearing to Ya'akov specifically at night was to demonstrate the extent of His connection with His chosen people: that it continues even in Exile. The nighttime prophetic experience was a sure sign that Hashem's *Shechinah*

(Presence) follows the sacred progeny even into the night of *galus*.

This is a key ingredient for the continuance of the Jewish people, whose very existence is quite precarious. According to the laws of "nature," they should, in fact, not exist at all. Avraham Avinu perceived in the stars that he – the father and progenitor of the Jewish nation – was actually incapable of procreation. That is, until Hashem instructed him to "Abandon your concerns with astrological matters," (see *Rashi, Bereishis* 15:5). In other words, the natural order of the universe will not tolerate the existence of Avraham's children, *rachmana litzlan*. It is only through a large measure of Divine Intervention and Assistance that they are able to survive.

And so, without the accompaniment of the *Shechinah*, the Jews in *galus* would be at the mercy of their numerous and formidable opponents, and they would succumb.

But for the *Shechinah* to accompany them in *galus* is no simple matter. In the era of prophecy, for example, a prophetic vision could not be attained outside of Eretz Yisrael, as Hashem will generally not rest His Presence on a mortal in *galus* (see *Moed Kattan* 25a and *Rashi s.v. Bavel*).

And so this situation presents a dangerous quandary for the Jewish people in Exile. They require the *Shechinah* in order to survive, yet the *Shechinah's* dwelling-place is in Eretz Yisrael.

There is an exception, though. The prophet Yechezkel was able to receive prophecy in Exile. The reason? His prophetic career began *while he still resided in Eretz Yisrael*. As *Rashi (Ibid.)* explains, the *Shechinah* will not rest among *galus* Jews for the first time. But someone who was previously connected to the *Shechinah*, having already prophesied in Eretz

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Yisrael, can maintain this bond even outside its borders.

This point, asserts the Meshech Chochmah, is key; since Ya'akov and his progeny had already been infused with the *Shechinah* in Eretz Yisrael, they could be rest assured that they could maintain this state of affairs even in Exile. This was the encouraging message Hashem was delivering to Ya'akov in the "night" visitation.

The Meshech Chochmah likens this idea to a *halachah* governing the offering of sacrifices, as recorded in the Mishnah in Megillah (2:5,6):

כָּל הַיּוֹם כָּשֶׁר... לְסַמֵּיכָהּ, לְשַׁחֲטָהּ, וְלִקְבָּלָהּ, וְלִהְיֶינָהּ... כָּל הַלַּיְלָה כָּשֶׁר... לְהַקְטִיר חֲלָבִים וְאַבְרִים.

"The entire day is the appropriate time to perform the following: hand-laying (on the animal to be sacrificed), slaughtering (of that animal)... receiving the blood (in a sanctified vessel), and sprinkling (of the blood on the altar)... The following are properly performed the entire night: ...burning the fats and limbs (of the sacrifice on the altar)."

The principal time for performing the services associated with a sacrifice is the daytime. Once the main ministrations (slaughtering, sprinkling the blood, etc.) were carried out by day, however, the remainder of the service can be completed at night. Since the preparation of the sacrifice began by day, the service may continue during a time that is otherwise inopportune for ritual offerings.

NO TIME FOR CHANGE

The Meshech Chochmah concludes his piece with an exhortation that is so very pertinent to all generations. We have seen that the key to the continued existence of the Jewish people in *galus* is its closeness and association with Hashem's Presence. Although the Diaspora is generally off-limits in this regard, the *Shechinah* nevertheless retains its Presence amongst the descendants of Ya'akov as a continuation of the connection that began long ago in Eretz Yisrael.

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But this can only be continued so long as the Jewish people retain their pristine identity in *galus*. In this way, they remain an extension of the nation formed by their forefathers and can continue to enjoy the accompaniment and protection of the *Shechinah*.

Throughout history, and in our times as well, the continued existence of the Jewish nation has been the focus of much discussion. Some have arisen to suggest new approaches, advocating the introduction of new and innovative ways to help "ensure" that Judaism remains "appealing" to the masses.

Yet, our *parshah* warns of the danger of this path. By deviating from the ways of our forefathers, a "new" entity is created. When the Jewish people no longer resemble their forebears, they can no longer lay claim to the connection with the *Shechinah* forged by the *Avos*. And only with the *Shechinah* in our midst is our survival guaranteed.

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