

This Week's Parshah - Parshas Vayigash

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of

Baila *bas* Aharon *a"h*

a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

On That Day

They say that big things come in small packages. This week's *parshah* conveys an invaluable lesson, with astounding ramifications. And it is all contained within two simple words.

Case Closed

The *parshah* opens with the brothers returning before Yosef with Yehudah as their spokesman. Up until this point, the *Shevatim* (Tribes) had been beset by an almost unrelenting series of perplexing and devastating blows, beginning from the start of their first foray to Mitzrayim. When originally appearing before the "Egyptian" viceroy to purchase food, they were suddenly and strangely singled out for harsh treatment. Accusations of spying were hurled against them, and they were forced to go to extraordinary lengths – to return with their youngest brother, Binyamin – in order to establish their innocence. All the while, their brother Shimon was incarcerated as a hostage.

Their anxiety mounted on their journey homeward when they found, to their shock, that the money with which they had purchased their goods had somehow made its way back into their sacks. The *passuk* describes their state of mind upon making this discovery: "And their hearts left them; terrified, they exclaimed to each other, 'What is this that Hashem has done to us?'" (*Bereishis* 42:28).

Further surprises were in store. Upon returning to Mitzrayim, they attempted to pre-empt further tragedy by telling the viceroy's attendant about the strange incident with their money. "Nothing to worry about," they were told. "It must be that your G-d granted you a windfall." They were invited to dine at the viceroy's house; upon taking their places, they noticed that the seating arrangements conformed exactly to their respective ages. "And they sat before him – the eldest according to his age, and the youngest according to his age; and the men were greatly confounded" (*ibid.* 43:33). Strange; nevertheless, everything seemed to be going much smoother. Shimon was back with them, the viceroy seemed to be pleased, and soon they were on their way back home. It appeared that their whole ordeal was finally over, and they could return their father's beloved, youngest son back to him, safe and sound.

In another moment, the tables turned dramatically, once again. They were hauled back before the viceroy; his silver goblet was missing, only to be found... in the sack of Binyamin! It seemed that the worst had come to pass: were they to return to their father without Binyamin? He would never survive the tragedy. So here they were: the climax of this long string of bewildering and wrenching events found them begging to remain as perpetual slaves to the viceroy so that Binyamin, at least, could return.

And then the seminal revelation burst forth. With two simple words, everything became crystal clear. The mysterious events, the bizarre treatment, all their questions – in a single instant, it all dissipated. The man said to them: "*Ani Yosef* – I am Yosef" (*ibid.* 45:3).

And So It Will Be...

Dramatic as this epic narrative is, the implications reverberate well beyond the brothers' own situation. In fact, as expounded in the *Sefer Ohel Moshe* (*Badei Nechamah*, ch. 7), this event foreshadows the nature of Hashem's future revelation upon Yisrael and the world.

As a person goes through life, he inevitably encounters challenges and travails. This he observes about his own life, as well as that of others. He might come across suffering and misery, and the meaning of it all escapes him.

Indeed, this is the nature of This World – especially in a time such as ours, when the *hester panim* (concealment of the Divine Presence) is so substantial. The truth is that there are many things that are simply beyond our ability to comprehend for the time being – so long as the righteous but secret calculations remain hidden from us. As the Mishnah states (*Avos 4:15*):

אֵין בְּיַדֵּינוּ לֹא מְשַׁלֵּוֹת הַרְשָׁעִים וְאֵף לֹא מִיִּסוּרֵי הַצְּדִיקִים.

“We are not privy (in This World) to the reasons for which some wicked people experience tranquility, while there are righteous who suffer affliction.”

But the test and the challenge for us is not to allow these perplexities to overwhelm us, but to remain steadfast in our faith that “The Rock, His acts are perfect, and all of His ways are just” (*Devarim 32:4*). Everything that occurs is orchestrated by Hashem for maximum benefit. And the day will yet come when these calculations will be revealed, and all creatures of the earth will recognize and give thanks for what was ultimately a blessing. The lesson of “*Ani Yosef*” demonstrates to us how a lifetime or thousands of years of suffering and confusion will take on an entirely new light in the blink of an eye.

In this regard, the *Ohel Moshe* (citing the *Me'am Lo'ez*) relates a remarkable story concerning the Ramban. A disciple of his had fallen deathly ill, and the sage went to visit him. As an extremely pious and spiritual personage – and a Kabbalistic master – the Ramban perceived in the unfolding events a Divinely orchestrated opportunity. He approached his disciple with a singular request.

Handing him an amulet with Kabbalistic inscriptions, the Ramban issued to his disciple some crucial instructions. “As you journey to the Next World, take this amulet with you; it will allow you to pass through numerous Heavenly gates, until you arrive at a most elevated celestial chamber. Once there, I bid you to ask the following questions I have that concern the welfare of Klal Yisrael.” With that, the Ramban handed him a piece of paper on which were listed the vital queries. He asked his disciple to return to him in a dream to relate the answers.

Some time after the disciple passed away, sure enough, the Ramban received a visitation. “It is as you had said,” the disciple reported. “The sacred implement you gave me opened all doors, allowing me to ascend to the chamber of which you spoke.” The Ramban, obviously, was anxious to hear the answers he so desperately sought. The reply, however, came as follows: “But *Rebbi*, when I came to present the questions, I suddenly realized – from that standpoint in the World of Ultimate Truth – that the questions, in fact, were not questions at all!”