



Snapshot Torah

GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

THIRD EDITION / ISSUE 11

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VAYIGASH

7th Teveth 5775

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 34, verses 18 - 30

- ✚ The viceroy is determined to keep Binyamin prisoner for the theft of his golden goblet.
- ✚ Yehudah steps forward and offers himself in exchange for his younger brother. He explained that he made an oath to his father that he would take full responsibility of Binyamin as he is the only remaining link to Yaacov's beloved wife; Rachel and her other son 'Yosef' whom are both dead. Yehudah pleads that if he returned home, failing to bring Binyamin back with him; Yaacov would surely die of a broken heart.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 34, verses 31 - Chapter 35, verse 7

- ✚ The viceroy is unable to control his emotions any longer and orders everyone to leave the room, as he wishes to speak to the brothers alone. Crying out loud, the viceroy revealed to the brothers his true identity, that he is in fact their long lost brother Yosef whom they sold all those years before.
- ✚ The brothers are so shocked and dumbfounded with the revelation that they became afraid and ashamed of what they had done. Yosef comforts them saying it was all part of Hashem's plan to bring him here to Mitzraim (Egypt) in order to preserve their lives from the famine.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 35, verses 8 - 18

- ✚ Yosef tells his brothers that as there is still five years famine yet to come and they should go back and tell Yaacov, their father the truth that his beloved son, Yosef is still alive and that he requested them to bring Yaacov back to Mitzraim so he would not starve.

R'Vi'i - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 35, verses 19 - 27

- ✚ Pharaoh discovers that Yosef's brothers are here with him and reiterates to them that Yaacov and their entire families will be made very welcome if they come back to stay in Mitzraim.
- ✚ Laden with wagons, donkeys full of provisions and gifts provided by Pharaoh and Yosef, the brothers return back to Canaan to inform their father that his beloved son Yosef is still alive and well.
- ✚ Yaacov refused to believe them at first, but when he sees the wagons approaching, Yaacov's grief ended and his spirit returned back to him.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 35, verse 28 - Chapter 36, verse 27

- ✚ Yaacov travels to beer-sheba to offer up a korbanos (sacrifice) to Hashem.
- ✚ Hashem comes to Yaacov in a vision, telling him to not be afraid because unlike his father Yitzchak, he will grant permission, allowing Yaacov to go down into Mitzraim.
- ✚ Yaacov, his wives, sons and their families depart Canaan and begin their journey towards Mitzraim.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 36, verse 28 – Chapter 37, verse 10

- ✚ Yehudah went on ahead to set up their new dwelling places in the fertile area of Mitzraim called Goshen. Yosef rushes out in his chariot to greet his father. After embracing each other, Yaacov reveals he is now ready to die.
- ✚ Yosef introduces his father to Pharaoh who when asked his age, Yaacov replies 'I'm 130 years old, but my years have been mainly unhappy ones'

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 37, verses 11 - 27

- ✚ .Yosef continues to work for Pharaoh and soon acquires for him the majority of the land of Mitzraim and its livestock. Yaacov and his family continue living in Goshen, where they prospered and multiplied.

Haftorah – YEHEZKEL (EZEIKEL) Chapter 37, verses 15 to 28

OVERVIEW:

- Following the death of Shlomo Hamelech, (King Solomon) the Jewish nation was divided. The tribes of Yehuda and Binyamin were governed by Rechavam (who was a direct descendant of David) and Yiravam (who was descended from Ephraim) and ruled over the other ten Tribes.
- Hashem commanded Yehezkel to take two pieces of wood and inscribe Yehuda on one piece and Ephraim on the other.
- Yehezkel then placed the two pieces together in his hand, where it miraculously fused into just one piece.

GEMATRIA LINKED TO THE SEDRA

- Pharaoh commanded Yosef to settle his brothers במיטב הארץ bema'ytav ha'aretz (In the best of the land.) Chapter 47, verse 11.
- This phrase has the numerical value of 359; corresponding to the gematria of the word גושן Goshen in which the Jewish People dwelt during their time in Mitzraim.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

The life and character of Yosef is one of the clearest passages of the Torah to demonstrate the correct way to behave, no matter the situation and illustrates the providence of Hashem.

This week's Torah portion of Vayiggash, reaches a climactic moment in the life of Yosef. After all the ordeals of betrayal, slavery, and imprisonment, followed by his dream interpretations and subsequent rise to power, Yosef is now faced with his treacherous brothers and has both the opportunity and the power to have them punished or even killed for what they made him go through all these years. So what does he do?

I'm sure no one would blame him and would even justify his actions if he decided to abuse his power and enact revenge on his brothers but instead, Yosef does a very astonishing and decent thing. He offers his petulant and unsympathetic brothers forgiveness, compassion, and reconciliation. He didn't even lecture his brothers on their misdemeanors or cajole them into making an apology. What happens instead? Yosef forgives and absolves them from any responsibility; putting their actions into a larger context by explaining that Hashem was behind the whole thing.

It should be noted that all of this happens after his brothers, at least Judah, refused to victimize Benjamin as they long ago had done to Yosef. Even though Yosef had experienced both treachery and divine assistance. He now had the opportunity to choose which of these experiences he will harbor the most and act upon. Justice or mercy? Revenge or forgiveness? We always expect, especially on Yom Kippur for Hashem to treat us with mercy, give us a second chance and forgive our past sins and mistakes. If the opportunity came, shouldn't we expect to offer the same to those who have wronged us also? choosing forgiveness over retribution does not mean Yosef ever forgot how his brothers treated him. He just knew as the old saying goes 'two wrongs don't make a right. Yosef recognized that holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; in the end you would be the one who gets burned.

Instead of permitting the boiling anger and hatred he must have felt towards his brothers which would have ultimately destroyed him, thus compounding the damage already inflicted upon himself, he refuses to allow rage to take over his life and define his actions. He does not lose control of his emotions, but more importantly, he retains control over his life knowing full well everything had been ordained by Hashem to play out the way it did as hinted by his earlier apparitions at the beginning of the 'Yosef Story' two weeks ago.

I truly believe This is a treasured lesson that we can learn and aspire to from our biblical ancestor Yosef. We, too, can break cycles of anger and hatred consuming and taking over our own lives simply by extinguishing the fire, defusing the situation and choosing the higher and righteous path.

