



*“I am Yosef
Is my father
still alive?”*

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Vayigash

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

Weely Video: Alive & Relevant To Perpetuate A People

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The Ultimate Display of Statesmanship

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1. Binyamin is accused of stealing the silver goblet of the viceroy.
2. Yehuda's response: Whoever took the goblet shall die.
3. How could he say that?
4. Lavan accused Yaakov of taking his fetishes, said whoever took the fetishes should die, understanding it was an impossibility.
5. Yaakov raised his family with exceptional level of integrity & holiness; that would be impossible.
6. Rachel took the fetishes to separate her father from idolatry.
7. Rachel our Matriarch passed away due to Yaakov's statement.
8. Yehuda, and his brothers, being raised by them, knew that this could not be.
9. Torah: "Yaakov was left all by himself."
10. Midrash: As it says, "G-d is exalted unto Himself," Yaakov is also unto himself.
11. Yehuda to the viceroy: "He (Binyamin) is left by himself to his mother."
12. Binyamin was the antagonist of Edom because he was the son of Rachel.

Dissipating The Trauma To Perpetuate A People

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1. Yosef revealed himself to his brothers and they were overwhelmed with shame.
2. He consoled them to not be saddened as G-d had sent him as their provider.
3. Yosef as Viceroy provided food for Egypt and all of the surrounding countries.
4. Yosef knew he was sold specifically for this purpose and prepared his family for the Egyptian exile.
5. Yosef names his first-born Menashe. G-d caused him to forget his family and strife he experienced.
6. The trauma and suffering his brothers caused was beyond repair and forgiveness.
7. If so emotionally scarred, it would have been impossible for Yosef to be a proper provider.
8. He wouldn't be selflessly dedicated without a trace of negativity towards them.
9. Yosef realized a miraculous transition began to occur: memories of his brothers' abuse faded as if it never happened.
10. To commemorate this miracle, Yosef named his son Menashe.
11. This was the basis for Yosef knowing beyond any doubt that he was sent to Egypt for this mission.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Vayigash



*“I am Yosef
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Mitzvos, the Equivalent of G-d’s Agents

Torah: “He (Yaakov) sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen...”

Rashi citing Chazal: Yaakov had sent Yehudah ahead of him to Egypt to establish a location of Torah study in order to prepare the way for him.

Midrash: “Reb Shimon Bar Yochai said, ‘G-d said to the Jewish people, ‘It is important for you to give honor to the mitzvos because the mitzvos themselves are the equivalent of My agents. And there is a principle that one’s agent is the equivalent of himself. If you honor the mitzvos it is considered as if you honor Me. If you disgrace the mitzvos then it is as if you are disgracing My Honor.’”

Rabbeinu Yonah in The Gates of Repentance and in his commentary on *Ethics of Our Fathers:* All of the mitzvos of the Torah are the equivalent of “appetizers (*parparaos*)” relative to the fear of heaven (*yiras shamayim*). Just as the appetizer is not intended to

satisfy the person but rather to stimulate his appetite, so too is the value of all the mitzvos of the Torah a means to demonstrate one’s fear of heaven. The intrinsic value of performing a mitzvah is not for its own sake alone, but also as a demonstration of one’s fear of G-d. When one observes the Shabbos, tefillin, dietary laws, etc. one is demonstrating his reverence for G-d because he is only adhering to the mitzvos because of his fear of G-d.

Midrash on Song of Songs (Shir Ha’Shirim) interprets the opening verses, “Good are Your beloved ones more than wine.” Meaning, the words of the Rabbis (*Sofrim*) are more beloved (to G-d) than the wine of Torah. This indicates that G-d values rabbinic enactments to a greater degree than the Divine Word – the Torah itself.

Rabbeinu Yonah: The reason for this is, because through the adherence to the Rabbinic fence, one is demonstrating a greater degree of fear of heaven. Rabbinic fences are intended to prevent one from coming to violate a Torah law. Observing a Rabbinic

fence., although it is not the Divine Word of the *Torah*, is a greater expression of the fear of G-d.

If one observes fences and the *mitzvos* meticulously, especially with a sense of privilege, it is an expression of one's fear (reverence) for G-d. In contrast, if one is haphazard in his observance or feels burdened, it is an indication that it is not important to take the precautions not to violate the *Torah* law.

Midrash: "There was no person who ever honored *mitzvos* and kept the *Torah* more than *Yaakov*. As it is stated, 'Yaakov is the perfect man who dwelt in the tents (of *Torah*).'" However, is it derived from this verse that *Yaakov* was unique regarding the special honor that he gave to *mitzvos*?

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*: "Great is study of *Torah* that it brings to actualization (of *mitzvos*)." When one studies *Torah*, with the proper mindset, one is able to grasp and internalize the importance of *mitzvos* and his motivated to actualize them. There is something innate within the study of *Torah* that affects the Jew and compels him to fulfill what he had studied. *Yaakov*, our Patriarch, was the embodiment of *Torah* and personified it. He was therefore unique regarding his reverence for G-d's Word (the *mitzvos*). was the Patriarch who embodied and personified *Torah*, he was unique regarding esteeming and revering His *mitzvos*.

We say in the blessing of "*Ahava Rabah*" that is recited before the *Shema*, "...instill in our hearts to understand and elucidate, to listen, learn, teach, safeguard, perform, and fulfill all the words of Your *Torah*'s teachings with love..." Based on the order that is mentioned in the blessing, one's degree of safeguarding and observing the *mitzvos* is predicated on one's understanding and retention of the *Torah*. The more profoundly one studies and internalizes the *Torah*, the more one will develop a sensitivity to observe the *mitzvos*.

Since *Yaakov* embodied the *Torah* to a greater degree than any of the Patriarchs, he was thus the one who kept the *mitzvos* and honored the *Torah* more than anyone else. This is also clearly stated in the blessing of repentance in the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer), "bring us back our Father, to Your *Torah* and bring us near our King to Your service..." The Men of the Great Assembly when they authored this blessing had communicated through it that the only way it is possible to repent properly is to first return to the study of *Torah*, which is the internalization of spiritual value. Once that has been properly accomplished, one is able to advance

himself to the level of service to the King by actualizing His Will, the *mitzvos*.

Clarity, a Necessary Component of Perspective

Torah: When *Yosef*'s brothers returned to their father *Yaakov* with the gifts that *Yosef* had sent for him, "And to his father he sent the following: ten he-donkeys laden with the best of Egypt and ten she-donkeys laden with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey..." If the intent of the *Torah* is to tell us that *Yosef* had sent his father *Yaakov* an abundant amount of provisions, why was it necessary to specify the number of donkeys that were needed to transport it?

Torah: When *Avraham* had sent *Eliezer* to seek out an appropriate wife for his son *Yitzchak* he took with him, "...ten camels of his master's camels and set out with all the bounty of his master..." Again, we see that the *Torah* identifies the number of camels that *Eliezer* had taken with him. Seemingly, the number of camels is significant for us to know. He sent ten specifically and not more or less. The ten camels that were sent with *Eliezer* was sent with a specific intent just as the ten donkeys laden with provisions was sent to *Yaakov* with a specific intent.

When *Avraham* had sent *Eliezer* to seek out the appropriate wife for *Yitzchak*, it was to identify the future Matriarch of the Jewish people. The *Torah* states, "The servant said to him (*Avraham*), 'Perhaps (*ulie*) the woman shall not wish to follow me to this land...'"

Chazal: The *Torah* writes the word "perhaps (*ulie*)" in its deficient form, with the letter "vav" deleted, to indicate *Eliezer*'s hesitation to travel to a far off land to find a wife for *Yitzchak*. *Eliezer* had a daughter who was devoutly righteous and he believed that perhaps she would be suitable to be *Yitzchak*'s wife, the future Matriarch.

Avraham understood the basis for *Eliezer*'s hesitation (*ulie*). The word "*ulie*" with the letter "vav" deleted can be read as "*eilie* (to me)". *Avraham* said to *Eliezer*, "It is not possible for your daughter to marry my son because you come from a cursed stock and I come from a blessed stock. Something cursed cannot cleave to something that is blessed. (The *Torah* tells us that *Noach* cursed *Cham*'s son *Canaan* who was the ancestor of *Eliezer*)." Since the future Matriarch was integral in establishing and securing the of the Jewish people, which is eternal, she must be of a pedigree that is blessed.

Yaakov's descent to Egypt was the beginning of the Jewish exile that was foretold to *Avraham*, our Patriarch at the Covenant Between the Parts. As it states, "You shall know that your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not their own. There, they will be enslaved and afflicted for 400 years." Yaakov understood that he needed to ensure that the future of the Jewish people in a spiritual context as well as the material. He needed to know in advance before leaving *Canaan* that the setting in Egypt in which his family would dwell was appropriate and ideal to protect and nurture their spiritual evolution, despite the fact that Egypt was a depraved society.

In order for Yaakov to raise his family in the home of his father in law *Lavan*, who personified evil and all that was associated with it, he created an insulated and holy environment that was not vulnerable to impurity. *Yosef's* role in Egypt as viceroy was to prepare that location for his family to minimize the negative effect of Egypt. *Yosef* as "the provider" would ensure the material and spiritual future of his family. Yaakov needed to be assured that *Yosef's* own spirituality was not compromised as a result of all of his years in Egypt. Even if his spiritual standing was slightly altered, his sensitivities to what was needed for the Jewish people was not sufficient for Yaakov.

Torah: "And they (*Yosef's* brothers) told him (*Yaakov*), 'Yosef is still alive,' also that he is ruler over all the land of Egypt...when he saw the wagons (*agalos*) that *Yosef* had sent to transport him, then the spirit of their father *Yaakov* was revived." When *Yaakov* saw the wagons that were sent by *Yosef*, his state of prophecy returned.

Rashi citing *Chazal*: *Yosef*, by sending wagons (*agalos*) to his father, communicated to him that although they had been separated for twenty-two years he had not forgotten the last *Torah* subject that they had studied together. The wagons (*agalos*) allude to the law of *eglah arufa* (the decapitated calf). Despite *Yosef's* being engulfed in a spiritual abyss, his spirituality remained unaffected. He remained spiritually complete and thus all that was necessary to ensure the future of the Jewish people was in place. This is similar to *Yaakov's* return to *Canaan* after being in the house of *Lavan*, the *Torah* states, "He had returned complete."

Chazal: "He returned complete in his wealth and spirituality." The environment of *Lavan's* community did not cause him to compromise his spirituality to any degree.

Rabbeinu Bachya in his commentary on the *Torah*: The number ten is repeated throughout the *Torah*. The

number ten is a manifestation of the Ten Utterances of G-d that brought existence into being.

Mishna in *Ethics of our Fathers*: "With ten utterances the world was created..." The objective of Creation is for the sake of the *Torah* and for the sake of the Jewish people to fulfill it.

Torah: "*Bereishis bara Elokim* – In the beginning G-d created ..."

Chazal: For the sake of *Torah*, which is referred to as "*reishis* (choicest)" and for the sake of the Jewish people who are also referred to as "*reishis* (chosen)" the world was created.

When *Eliezer* was sent with ten camels to seek out the future Matriarch it was to indicate and emphasize that his mission was for the specific purpose to guarantee and secure the spiritual future of the Jewish people who are meant to fulfill the objective of Creation that was brought about through the Ten Utterances. This could only come about if the woman that was found qualified to be the Matriarch. Only then the Ten Utterances could come to fruition.

When *Yosef* sent his father *Yaakov* the ten donkey laden with provisions, he was communicating to him that he had not forgotten the objective of Creation. Thus, *Yosef* was spiritually whole. All that he had accomplished in Egypt was for the sake of the Jewish people to be able to maintain themselves spiritually and survive the exile.

Lack of Clarity, the Basis for Rationalization

Torah: After *Yosef* had revealed himself to his brothers, they were overwhelmed and were not able to respond.

Midrash: The brothers were overwhelmed with embarrassment because at that moment they understood that *Yosef's* dreams were in fact true. They realized that they had unjustly brought untold suffering upon him when they had sold him into slavery.

Torah: "He (*Yosef*) then kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; afterwards his brothers conversed with him."

Midrash: "*Yosef* kissed each of his brothers and wept upon them. As a result of *Yosef's* weeping, they were appeased. Similarly, when G-d will ultimately redeem the Jewish people He will do so through their crying.

"*Yirmiya*: 'They will come with tears and with great beseeching I (G-d) will lead them...'" Meaning, just as *Yosef's*

weeping appeased his brothers, so too will the weeping of the Jewish people at the end of time bring their redemption. What is the correlation between Yosef's weeping and the ultimate redemption of the Jewish people?

The strife between Yosef and his brothers emanated from a misunderstanding that they had believed that his dreams were delusions of grandeur that one day he will reign over them. According to Yosef's dreams, his entire family was destined to become subservient to him.

His brothers thought that Yosef's dreams were rooted in his arrogance and feelings of superiority over them. The brothers were concerned, based on their understanding, that because of his delusions of grandeur, Yosef was going to ultimately cause their father Yaakov to curse them, which was the equivalent of death. Thus, they decided to remove him in a way that he could not bring harm upon them, which eventually concluded with selling him into slavery.

When Yosef's brothers initially descended to Egypt to purchase grain, he did not reveal himself to them. He presented himself only as the viceroy of Egypt. He accused them of being spies and demanded that they bring their youngest brother *Binyamin* to him. Until the moment that Yosef had revealed himself to his brothers he conducted an ingenious charade that would cause them to bow to him and become subservient. After he had revealed himself as Yosef, their brother who was sold to be a slave, the brothers were not convinced that his motives were pure and genuine. They believed that again he only wanted to subordinate and control them due to his arrogance.

However, when they saw him cry to the degree that he had, they were convinced that he was truly a person of integrity and righteous. When one cries from the depths of his being, it is an indication that his self is negated at that moment. When one is confronted with truth and cannot escape its reality, to rationalize or justify otherwise, one cries because of the profundity of the moment. He could no longer continue as he wanted.

Chazal: "At the end of time all of the holidays will come to an end with the exception of *Purim* and all sacrifices will cease to be except for the thanks offering (*korban todah*)."

Maharal of Prague z'tl in his work on *Purim*: All sacrifices will come to an end with the exception of the thanks offering because the truth of existence will become

revealed and blatantly clear. It will cause a recognition that one will not be able to restrain himself from giving thanks to G-d. All mankind will realize that everything at every moment emanates from G-d.

Sacrifices are meant to provide atonement for sin, which is consequence of a lack of clarity and understanding of the wrong. At the end of time when G-d will reveal Himself and destroy all evil, one will no longer sin. There will be no longer any need for sacrifices, with the exception of the thanks offering to express one's gratitude to G-d. On *Purim*, the Jewish people reaffirmed their acceptance of the *Torah* out of love. As a result of the miracle of *Purim*, it was understood and confirmed to the Jewish people that G-d's love for them was unlimited. He had caused their imminent annihilation to be reversed.

Because of this level of recognition and understanding, they accepted the *Torah* out of love.

Gemara in Tractate *Sukkah*: At the end of time G-d will destroy the evil inclination. At this time, the devoutly righteous (*tzaddikim*) will cry and the evil ones (*reshaim*) will cry. The evil will cry when G-d will show them how minute their evil inclination truly was. They will see that their inclination was no more than a hairbreadth. They will cry and say, "How was it possible that such a insignificant power control our lives and we were not able to conquer it!"

In contrast, the devoutly righteous will cry because at the end of time G-d will show them the enormity of their evil inclination, which is the equivalent of a large mountain. They will all be overwhelmed with tears saying, "How were we able to conquer such a mountain?" (The greater the individual the greater is his evil inclination). We see that when one is confronted with truth that cannot be ignored, he is overwhelmed with crying. The Jewish people will cry at the end of time and repent because of the clarity that they will achieve at that moment. It is because of this recognition of truth that the ultimate redemption will come.

Gemara in Tractate *Eruvin*: "Those who are absolutely evil, even at the entrance of *geheimom* will not repent." The absolutely evil will not have the capacity to come upon truth, to receive clarity to recognize the wrong that they had done.

Correcting Avraham's Oversight

Torah: Yaakov and his family had descended to Egypt to begin the exile of the Jewish people that would

last for 210 years. The Jewish people were destined to experience bondage and suffering for hundreds of years. Why was it necessary for the Jewish people to experience the Egyptian exile and bondage?

There is an argument in the *Gemara* in Tractate *Nidarim* regarding the reason the Jewish people needed to be exiled to Egypt. One opinion states that it was a because of the incident between *Avraham*, our patriarch and the king of *Sodom*.

Torah: *Avraham* had defeated the four mighty kings. One of the communities that had been taken captive was the kingdom of *Sodom*. *Avraham*, as the victor, had the right to all the spoils of war – both the people and their possessions. The king of *Sodom*, although he was considered to be a chattel of *Avraham*, he nevertheless approached him and said, “Give me the people and take the possessions for yourself.” *Avraham* said to the king of *Sodom*, “...I will not take as much as a thread to a bootstrap, or anything of yours! ...”

Gemara: *Avraham* had the opportunity to take the members of the *Sodom* community and convert them to monotheism, but he did not. For this oversight, the Jewish people needed to be exiled to Egypt. Since *Avraham* did not take the proper initiative at that moment all the people of *Sodom* were ultimately destroyed by G-d.

Maharal of Prague zt'l in Gevuros Hashem: How is the bondage of the Jewish people in Egypt and their ultimate redemption a correction for *Avraham's* sin of not converting the people of *Sodom* to monotheism? In order to extricate the Jewish people and spiritually rehabilitate them from their bondage in Egypt, G-d brought about their redemption through revealed miracles. All ten plagues that came upon Egypt demonstrated to the world that G-d was the Supreme Master of the Universe. As a consequence of the revealed miracles in Egypt and the subsequent splitting of the Sea, G-d revealed Himself to the entire world in a context that He had never previously done.

The world was in awe of the Jewish people and the One G-d whom took them as His people. The world understood that their position of paganism was not correct. *Yisro*, the sheik of *Midian*, was so awestruck and moved by what he had heard regarding the Jewish people that he abandoned all of his glory to go out into the desert and convert to Judaism. Since *Avraham* had missed the opportunity to sanctify G-d's Name by taking the members of the *Sodom* community and converting them to monotheism, G-d caused the Jewish people to

go to Egypt so that they could be redeemed through miracles and wonders that brought about something that *Avraham* had failed to accomplish.

Torah: On the third day after *Avraham's* circumcision, G-d took the sun out of its sheath and caused it to be the hottest day in existence in order to give *Avraham* a respite from his involvement with hospitality. Rather than convalescing, *Avraham* sat at the entrance of his tent in a state of being pained because he could not offer his hospitality to anyone. *Avraham* was distraught that there was no one to host because his hospitality was only a pretext to engage his guests in a dialogue to refute paganism.

Every moment that an individual did not enter into his tent, *Avraham* felt it was the equivalent of a desecration of G-d's Name. People were living in G-d's world being unaware of Who the Master is. Because *Avraham* was pained that he could not engage in the espousal of monotheism, He sent him three wayfarers who were angels in human form, who were the most special guests. *Avraham* had learned his lesson well. After hearing from G-d what was decreed upon his descendants because he had not take the opportunity to bring the members of *Sodom* to monotheism, he internalized the urgency to convert humanity to believe in G-d. This is what G-d wants.

Although *Yaakov* understood that the Jewish people needed to experience the exile in Egypt he was concerned and frightened about their ability to be able to spiritually and physically survive that impure environment. G-d said to *Yaakov*, “...Have no fear of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation. I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up...” G-d reassured *Yaakov* that it was only by descending to Egypt could the Jewish people ascend to be a great nation. Only as a great nation, who was in bondage, could the Jewish people have brought about such a visible declaration of G-d's Dominion that the entire world was in awe of their redemption from Egypt. Thus the sin of *Avraham* was corrected.

Yaakov, the Father of the Jewish People (Mikeitz)

Torah: When the famine came upon the land of *Canaan*, “*Yaakov* had perceived that there were provisions (*shever*) in Egypt...”

Rashi citing Chazal: “The term *shever* (provisions) can also mean hope. *Yaakov* had a sense of hope in Egypt. (*Yosef* may still be alive).”

Midrash: “King David writes in Psalms, ‘Fortunate is the one who has the G-d of *Yaakov* to assist him.’ Why does King David only identify G-d as ‘the G-d of *Yaakov*?’ Why not ‘the G-d of *Avraham*’ or ‘the G-d of *Yitzchak*?’ It is because G-d did not associate Himself with any of the Patriarchs as He had done with *Yaakov*. As the verse states regarding *Yaakov*’s dream on Mt. *Moriah*, ‘...G-d (*neetzav alov*) stood upon him (*Yaakov*).’”

Midrash: “*Reb Semon* said, ‘When does a king go out to see his field? It is not when it is being plowed and cultivated. It is not when it is being sowed. It is only when all the harvest has been reaped and the grain is piled up does the king go out into the field.’

Similarly, *Avraham* was the one who prepared the field for planting. As the verse states, ‘G-d said to *Avraham*, ‘Walk the length and breadth of the Land...’ *Yitzchak* sowed the field. As the verse states, ‘...*Yitzchak* sowed.’ The king did not come until *Yaakov* came into being who was the equivalent of the harvested wheat. As the verse states, ‘Israel (*Yaakov*) is sanctified to G-d – the choicest of His wheat ...’ Thus, the king (G-d) stood upon *Yaakov*.’”

Eitz Chaim (commentator on the *Midrash*): “The *Midrash Rabah* refers to *Yaakov* as the ‘most special of the Patriarchs’; however, the *Midrash* also states, ‘although it is true that *Yaakov* was the most special, G-d loved all the Patriarchs equally.’ It is because each of them had a level of piety that was equivalent of the other. However, regarding spiritual accomplishment, *Yaakov* was the greatest of them all. As we see *Yaakov*, who was the third Patriarch, is referred to as ‘the choicest of His wheat...’”

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: Because *Avraham* fathered *Yishmael* in addition to *Yitzchak* it was an indication that he possessed a certain degree of impurity within himself. He was thus not qualified to father the Jewish people. Since *Yitzchak* fathered *Esav* in addition to *Yaakov*, it was an indication that there

was spiritual impurity that was contained within him. Thus, he was not qualified to father the twelve tribes.

In contrast, *Yaakov* because he did not possess any degree of impurity, as the *Midrash* compares him to the wheat that is piled in the field, he was thus qualified to father the twelve tribes of Israel (*shivtei Ka*) who were all pure and holy. *Yaakov* could not have achieved his level of purity without *Avraham* and *Yitzchak* purging themselves of their own impurity. He was only able to be the most special of the Patriarchs because *Avraham* and *Yitzchak* had preceded him.

It is interesting to note that the *Midrash* refers to *Avraham* as the one who “plowed the field.” *Yitzchak* is the one who “sowed the field.” *Yaakov* is the harvested wheat that is piled in the field. There is no mention of the one who harvested the wheat. If *Avraham* prepared the field for planting and *Yitzchak* sowed it, who harvested the bounty?

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: If one studies *Torah* and does not review it, it is the equivalent of planting without harvesting. We see that planting without harvesting has no value. Thus, we must say that when *Chazal* tell us that *Yitzchak* planted it is implicit that he also harvested (otherwise the planting would have no value). However, the process that was needed to bring the wheat to a perfect level, was conducted by *Yaakov* himself. It was by advancing his own spirituality and purging himself of any impurity, was he able to achieve the status of the ‘choicest of His wheat.’

He was the “perfect man who dwelt in the tents (of *Torah*).” By devoting his life to the study of *Torah*, he became the purest of His wheat. It was because *Yaakov* achieved this level of completion and perfection that he is referred to as the “choicest of the Patriarchs.” It is from him that the Jewish people descend. They are referred to as “the children of Israel” and not as the children of *Avraham* or the children of *Yitzchak*. This is the reason King David writes in Psalms, “Fortunate is the one who has the G-d of *Yaakov* to assist him.” Thus, the children of *Yaakov*, the Jewish people are able to retain an ongoing and intimate relationship with G-d because they are the Children of Israel.



Yad Avraham Institute