

SEDRAH SELECTIONS PARSHAS VA'YICHI 5775 BS"D

Ch. 47, v. 28: "Shva esrei shonoh" – Seventeen years – Yaakov sustained Yoseif for seventeen years and now Yoseif sustained Yaakov for seventeen years. (Chizkuni)

We might add that the medrash (see Rashi on Breishis 37:2) lists many things that happened to both Yaakov and Yoseif. Here too, Yaakov sustained Yoseif for the same amount of years that Yoseif sustained Yaakov. (n.l.)

Ch. 47, v. 29: "Va'yik'r'vu y'mei Yisroel lomás" – And the days of Yisroel came close to die – Yaakov in his blessings to his sons gave Yehudoh greatness over Reuvein and similarly to Efraim over Menasheh. The Torah tells us here that he was coming close to death but was not on death's door. He was lucid and in complete control of his faculties and these decisions were binding. (Medrash Hagadol)

Ch. 48, v. 5: "Efrayim u'Menasheh kiReuvein v'Shimon yi'h'yu li" - Efrayim and Menasheh shall be to me like Reuvein and Shimon - Pirkei d'Rebbi Eliezer chapter #36 derives from these words that grandchildren are considered as if they are children, since Yaakov equated these two grandchildren to his own children. The Ri"ף brings the words of the following verse to prove this point, "Umolad't'cho asher holadto acharei'hem l'cho yi'h'yu," that those who are born after them are to you. Since we have no record of Yoseif having any more children, we must say that Yaakov is referring to children born to Efrayim and Menasheh. Only Yaakov's great-grandchildren are to Yoseif, but Efrayim and Menasheh themselves are to be considered Yaakov's own children, hence we see "bnei vonim ha'rei heim k'vonim." The Haflo'oh explains that the Ri"ף is reluctant to use the source of Pirkei d'Rebbi Eliezer because we can say that Yaakov only equated them to his own actual children for being calculated as two tribes by virtue of a directive from Hashem, a prophecy that one of the tribes will later split into two. Yaakov chose to bestow this benefit upon Yoseif's children, but there is no proof from here that "bnei vonim ha'rei heim k'vonim."

Ch. 49, v. 21: "Hanosein imrei shoffer" – Who gives nice words – He who pledges to give doesn't always carry through. He who gives, his original words were nice. (Rabbi Chaim Brisker b'derech tzachus)

Ch. 49, v. 22: "Bnos tzo'adoh a'lei shur" – Daughters have marched upon a wall – This refers to Yoseif's descendants the daughters of Tzelafchad. Although Moshe could not pass over the Yardein River, i.e. it was as if it were an impenetrable wall for him, nevertheless, for the daughters it was passable, as they merited to have a portion in Eretz Yisroel. (Yalkut Shimoni)

Ch. 50, v. 17: "Ana sa na" – Please forgive now – These words create a palindrome. Since these words can be read the same forwards and backwards there is a reciprocal message here, that if you forgive others they will likewise forgive you. Similarly we have, "Va'yo'vei l'oviv" (Breishis 27:31), where Eisov brought food to his father Yitzchok so that he receive a blessing, which can be read the same in both directions. This carries a reciprocal message as well. If you honour your parents your children will see this and replicate the behavior and you as a parent will be honoured. As well we have the word "V'nosnu," by donating to the Mishkon. The message is that if you give you will likewise receive if you become needy. (Shabbos Tish on parshas Toldos)

Ch. 50, v. 20: "V'a'tem chashavtem olai ro'oh Elokim chashovoh l'tovoh" – And you have planned upon me bad and G-d has considered it for good – Why did Yoseif say that they "planned" for bad, given that they sold him? They actually DID bad! This, says Haksav V'hakaboloh, is a proof for the opinion (Rashbam, Rabbeinu Bachyei, Baalei Tosfos) that the brothers never sold Yoseif, as they were preempted by either the Yish'm'eilim or the Midyonim.

Ch. 50, v. 20: "V'a'tem chashavtem olai ro'oh Elokim chashovoh l'tovoh" – And you have planned upon me bad and G-d has considered it for good – "Ro'oh" has no Lamed prefix while "l'tovoh" does. This is because their plans were for a direct result of bad, be it sending destructive dogs upon him, lowering him into a pit, and selling him as a slave to people who were descending to Egypt. Hashem considered it FOR good, although there was difficulty in the beginning, it LEAD TO good once Yoseif was released from jail and made the viceroy. (n.l.)

Ch. 50, v. 21: "V'atoh al tiro'u onochi achalkeil es'chem" – And now fear not I will sustain you – What concern would his brothers have had for sustenance? The famine ended when their father Yaakov descended to Egypt. Tosefta Sotoh asks this and answers that when Yaakov died the famine resumed, as the seven years were not fulfilled. Did Yoseif once again collect food for distribution to the masses or where they apprised of how to maintain it for long periods of time as did Yoseif? As well, was there an added problem of not having much to amass as in Egypt there was not a bumper crop just before Yaakov's death? Any help would be appreciated.

Ch. 50, v. 21: "V'atoh al tiro'u onochi achalkeil es'chem" – And now fear not I will sustain you – Yoseif's brothers asked Yoseif to enslave them as a punishment for what they had done to him. Yoseif responded that they should not fear that he would enslave them. Rather, he would sustain them and this in and of itself would be their punishment. (Ro'isi)

Ch. 50, v. 21: "Va'yadabair al libom" – And he spoke to their heart – This insight is the reverse of the previous one. What did he have to speak to their heart? Having just said that he would sustain them, they felt dispirited at the prospect of having to rely on someone else for basic sustenance, even if it was their own brother. Yoseif therefore spoke to them to make them feel as if they were eating their own well-earned food. (Binoh L'itim)

This is especially poignant given that Yoseif dreamed that their grain bundles would bow down to his, i.e. that they would have to rely on him for food.

Ch. 50, v. 22: "Vayichi Yoseif mei'oh vo'esser shonim" – And Yoseif lived one-hundred and ten years – Why is it necessary to write this here given that in verse 26, where Yoseif's death is recorded, it says that he was one-hundred and ten years old when he died?

Ch. 50, v. 22: "Vayichi Yoseif mei'oh vo'esser shonim" – And Yoseif lived one-hundred and ten years – Since the creation of the world as recorded in the Torah, there was no one whose years were as short as were Yoseif's. This is so even though he bestowed great honour upon his father when he lived in Egypt. This teaches us that the end of the verse that says that the reward for honouring one's parents is living long does not specifically mean here in this world, but rather, it means a reward in the world-to-come. (Sefer Chasidim)

Ch. 50, v. 26: "Bo'orone" – In the casket – The verse does not say "b'orone," in A casket, but rather "bo'orone," in the casket. This is because the casket in which he was buried was the same one that was taken with his remains back to Eretz Yisroel. His remains were never transferred to another casket. (Ponim Yofos)

OROH V'SIMCHOH - MESHECH CHOCHMOH ON PARSHAS VA'YICHI BS"D

Ch. 47, v. 31: "Va'yishtachu Yisroel al rosh hamitoh" - When Yitzchok gave Yaakov the blessings that he wrested away from Eisov, Yitzchok said, "Yaavducho amim v'yishtachavu l'chol'umim" (Breishis 27:29). The word "v'yishtachavu" is spelled defectively, lacking a second letter Vov after the Ches. The Baal Haturim says that this alludes to the six generations from King Dovid until Yoram, when the Edomites were subordinate to the bnei Yisroel (M'lochim 2:8:20).

The MESHECH CHOCHMOH says that the lack of the letter Vov alludes to 6 nations who will not be subordinate to the bnei Yisroel. They are the nations that occupied Canaan and were destroyed. Although there were actually seven nations that resided in Canaan, the gemara Yerushalmi Shviis chapter #6 says that the Girgoshi nation left Canaan and ran to Africa before the bnei Yisroel even entered the land.

Once on the subject of the word "v'yishtachavu" or "va'yishtachavu" spelled "v'yishtachu" or "va'yishtachu," "kri" and "ksiv," the MESHECH CHOCHMOH explains why we find this as well in Breishis 43:28. Apparently, the brothers of Yoseif returned to Egypt with Binyomin in tow, and they bowed down to Yoseif. The MESHECH CHOCHMOH explains that the intention of this word is singular (The MESHECH CHOCHMOH seems to follow the "ksiv" and not the "kri"), and refers to Binyomin only. In 42:6 we find that the bnei Yaakov bowed down to Yoseif. They again did so in 43:26, both times described as "va'yishtachavu artzoh." Thus, until our verse, the brothers bowed down to Yoseif twice, save Binyomin who was not present at their first descent to Egypt. In our verse Binyomin ALONE bowed down

to Yoseif, but note that it does not say "artzoh.". We now have the fulfillment of the dreams insofar as the brothers bowed down to Yoseif twice.

Since only Binyomin bowed down in our verse, we understand why all of a sudden "Va'yiso einov va'yar es Binyomin" (verse 29). Binyomin was already there together with his brothers. Why suddenly now did Yoseif note his presence? This is because earlier in verse 26 he did as his brothers did, all bowing in unison. There was nothing to catch Yoseif's attention. However, now that Binyomin alone bowed to him, Yoseif took special note of his presence.

In our verse we find that Yaakov bowed to Yoseif, "va'yishtachu Yisroel al rosh hamitoh," but he did not prostrate himself on the ground. Thus Yaakov rebutted Yoseif's second dream with, "Havo novo ani v'imcho v'achecho l'hishtachavose l'cho ORTZOH?" (Breishis 37:10). Will I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down to you prostrated on the ground? Yaakov not only indicated that Yoseif's mother could not bow down to him, as she had already passed on, but also that Yaakov himself would not bow to the ground, and as well, not all his brothers would do so twice, contrary to the indication of the second dream, as Binyomin would not bow to the ground a second time.

Ch. 47, v. 31: "Va'yishtachu Yisroel al rosh hamitoh" – Rashi says that Yaakov was pleased that Yoseif, who was captured and grew up among heathens, had remained righteous. The MESHECH CHOCHMOH explains that Yaakov not only noted that Yoseif was righteous, but was also assured that he would remain so for the rest of his life. Yoseif lived for a total of 110 years (50:26). He was 30 years old when he was brought to Paroh to divine his dreams (41:46). Seven years of abundance and two years of famine passed immediately after this. Yaakov's descent to Egypt brought the famine to an end. Thus Yoseif was 39 years old when Yaakov was reunited with him. Yaakov was 130 years old at the time (47:9). Yaakov lived in Egypt for 17 years (47:28) and died at the age of 147 years.

When we add the 7 years of abundance, the 2 years of famine, and the last 17 years of Yaakov's life, we have a total of 26 years. Thus Yoseif was 56 years old when he appeared in front of his father in our verse. The gemara Yoma 38b says that if the majority of a person's years pass, and he has remained righteous, we can rest assured that he will remain righteous for the rest of his life. Fifty-six years was the majority of the 110 years of Yoseif's life.

CHAMISHOH MI YODEI'A – FIVE QUESTIONS ON THE WEEKLY SEDRAH – PARSHAS VA'YICHI 5775 – BS"D

1) Ch. 47, v. 28: "Sheva shonim v'arbo'im u'm'as shonoh" – Seven years and forty and one-hundred years – Rashi comments on the years of Soroh's life (Breishis 23:1) that her one-hundred years are compared to her twenty years, and her twenty years are compared to her seven years. This is because the word "years" is mentioned three times. Here we have the word "years" only twice. Taamo Dikro offers that it is left out once because there is no comparison of years to years for beauty for a man, as per the gemara K'subos 59. However, this seems problematic, as we find "years" by Avrohom three times, and a comparison of his being sinless by all three. If so, we are left with the question, "Why is the term 'years' only mentioned two times by Yaakov?"

2) Ch. 47, v. 29: "V'osiso imodi chesed ve'emes al noh tik'b'reini b'Mitzroyim" – And you shall do kindness and truth with me please do not bury me in Egypt – Rashi explains that burial of a deceased is a kindness of truth, meaning that it is pure, as the one who involves himself in the burial of a deceased will not receive any reward, as the deceased cannot pay back the kindness. This is puzzling, as the mishnah Sotah 9b clearly states that as a reward for Yoseif's carrying out Yaakov's burial wishes, he was likewise rewarded with the merit of having Moshe take responsibility for his casket.

3) Ch. 47, v. 31: "Va'yishtachu Yisroel al rosh hamitoh" – And Yisroel bowed while at the head of the bed – Rashi explains Yaakov's actions, meaning that after all he was the father, and yet we find him bowing to his son. Rashi answers with a folk saying, "Taala b'idnei sagid lei," – A fox at his time (when he is in power, albeit that he is but a fox), nevertheless bow to him. In 48:2, when Yaakov is apprised of Yoseif's arrival it says, "Va'yis'chazeik Yisroel va'yeishev al hamitoh." There Rashi comments that even though Yoseif was his son, he nevertheless accorded him honour because one is required to accord kingship honour. Why here does Rashi explain it with the folk saying and in 48:2 with a ruling that one is to accord kingship honour?

4) Ch. 48, v. 20: “Y’simcho Elokim K’Ephraim v’chiMenasheh” – May Elokim place you as Ephraim and Menasheh – Why is the blessing to be like Ephraim and Menasheh rather than any two other tribes?

5) Ch. 49, v. 13: “Zevulun l’chof yamim yishkone” – Zevulun will reside at the sea shore – Rashi explains that the members of the tribe of Zevulun will be seafarers, bringing income that they will share with Yisochor. Rashi goes on to say that this is stated more clearly in Moshe’s blessing in parshas V’zose Habrochah. Zevulun receives a share in Yisochor’s Torah studies, as he is his enabler. We have an axiom that “Hamvazveiz al y’vazveiz yoser michomesh” (gemara Ksuvos 67b), that one who dispenses money for tzedokah should not expend more than a fifth of his income. Does this apply as well to being a supporter in a Yisochor-Zevulun arrangement?

ANSWERS:

#1

Perhaps we can answer that it is left out because during some of the years between 40 and 140 Yaakov was not sin free. He was not fulfilling the mitzvah of honouring his parents. Another possibility is because he was still single at that age. (Nirreh li)

#2

Yaakov knew that eventually all the bnei Yisroel would leave Egypt. He could have been temporarily buried in Egypt and at the time of the exodus he would have been brought to Eretz Yisroel for burial. However, he did not want to be buried there even temporarily. This was the “chesed shel emes” he requested of Yoseif, to not be interred even temporarily. The word “noh” should not be translated as “please,” but rather, as “now.” “Don’t bury me in Egypt even if it is just for now.” (Mahara”l Tzintz in M’lo Ho’omer)

#3

In our verse Yaakov is asking Yoseif to do his request. We cannot derive from this the axiom Rashi states in 48:2, because in our situation “Taala b’idnei sagid lei” is sufficient to explain his actions. In 48:2, where Yoseif came to Yaakov to receive blessings for himself and his sons it is only because of “cholkim kovode t’machus” that Yaakov sat erect in his bed. (Avnei Shoham)

Alternatively, here where Yaakov bowed to Yoseif it might well have been by virtue of protocol, “taala b’idnei sagid lei,” but not in 48:2, where the verse clearly states that he had to exert himself, “Va’yis’chazeik Yisroel.” The exertion can only be because of “cholkim kovode l’malchus,” even a father to a son, which is not a protocol, but an halachic requirement. (Gri”z haLevi)

#4

The others were given their status through their father, while Ephraim and Menasheh received it from their grandfather. The blessing is that in all future generations the children should not only absorb the values of their fathers, but also of previous generations, from their grandfathers as well. (Nirreh li)

#5

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein in Igros Moshe Y.D. 4:37 considers this arrangement not as simple charity, but rather, as a sort of spiritual business arrangement, a partnership of sorts, and therefore says that the limitation of 1/5th does not apply.

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