

Parshas Vayigash

In this week's parsha, the brothers try to convince Yosef not to hold Binyamin back until Yosef finally reveals himself to them, with the famous line from 45:3: "I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?"

Then Yosef tells the brother how he prepared the land and was instrumental in saving the land of Egypt. In the interaction, Yosef tells the brother to "go up" (posuk 45:9) to get Yakov, for which Rashi explains that Israel is the highest of all the lands. In a commentary in the Sapirstein Chumash, they bring multiple sources from Maharal to Gemara on whether Israel is physically the highest land, i.e. to go up, so a topographical analysis versus a spiritual explanation that Israel is the highest, i.e. holiest of all lands. Further quotes from Chasam Sofer explain that since, according to the Gemara in Yoma 54b, creation began from the Temple Mount, it can, therefore, be considered the "center" of the sphere of the earth. (Theoretically, any point on the sphere can be the center relative to all distances protruding from it.)

Why was it essential for Rashi to explain this here? Couldn't Rashi have said that since Israel is north of Egypt, it is a figurative "going up" or that since Yakov is Yosef's father, and Yosef was according to respect to his father, even though he was a viceroy, by saying go up to my father? Yet, Rashi says, "the Land of Israel is the highest of all lands."

I think the answer is that everything written in the Torah is for a specific reason. It could be contemplated that

Yosef made Egypt so palatable for them to live on a Gashmiyus level; it is possible to think that we would get comfortable in the physical pleasures. If the physical realm, for which we draw energy to live, is more relaxed, it is more difficult to see the reason for change or to want to leave the Golus. Yet, it is still Golus. It is still the temporary existence that, pleasurable as it may be, is not the holy land that remains Israel.

This is what Rashi tells us: even if we read in the Pesukim about all the great things Yosef set up and that things would be comfortable, the eye must remain on the prize. Furthermore, their time, as promised to Avraham, in Egypt would ultimately be temporary to receive the Torah. As Zohar points out, going down to the Egypt episode was all by divine providence and design, including how, when, and with which **people** the story would unfold. Therefore, if it is by divine design, every action has a purpose and something for us to draw on. In our case, even if Golus has its perks (like it may have looked in Yosef's time), the eye must remain on the prize, that Israel is the holy land, and we are awaiting our salvation from Golus. We cannot get consumed by the pleasures except to drive our holiness and further connection to Hashem and our work to bring Mashiach one step closer.

Good Shabbos.