

Parshas Vayeishev

This week's Parsha Vayeishev is the point at which the brothers sell Yosef, who ends up in Egypt. In Perek 38, there is a story of Yehuda and his daughter-in-law Tamar, who bore twins, Peretz and Zerach. It seems out of place that, as the Torah recounts Yosef, his brothers, and his journey to Egypt, this event appears.

The story is written because Mepharshim comment that, although the events seem out of the ordinary, greatness can arise from a storied past. Rashi explains that the story is placed here to show that the brothers demoted Yehuda because he had suggested selling Yosef; they claimed that, if they had been told to bring Yosef home, they would have listened. This explanation supports the conclusion that Yosef had to be sold and that the Jews' journey through Egypt began in advance of redemption. Meaning Yakov and his sons, and the narrative described in the Torah can easily be explained as the whole episode was scripted (as I've explained in other years). Yehuda was then in control of ensuring the outcome for Yosef, as Rashi describes, as the brothers claimed.

Yehuda is the progenitor of David Hamelech, who is the progenitor of Mashiach. Yosef is the progenitor of Mashiach ben Yosef, whose role is to prepare the land for Mashiach. This means that, Yehuda, sending Yosef fulfilled the narrative's requirement that a person (specifically Yosef) go and prepare the land for the Jews and effect the resulting redemption. Therefore, between Yosef being sold and Yosef's life in Egypt, the birth of the progenitors of David Hamelech (Peretz, one of the twins from

the story) and Mashiach needs to be mentioned here. This ties the events of Yosef directly to the events of our Golus. Since the Torah is not a history book, the narratives described here are intended to help us mirror those events in our own time. Just as Avraham was promised that the Jews would go down to Egypt and return with wealth, and the resulting redemption meant the Torah was given on Har Sinai, solidifying, for all time until Mashiach, the way in which we must live and serve Hashem for the eventual bringing of Mashiach. Just as Yosef was the precursor and preparer of Egypt for the arrival of the Jews, so they can be redeemed and fulfill the promise; likewise, we must learn about the birth of Mashiach through the story of Yehuda and Tamar. This gives us hope that just as the Jews were redeemed from Egypt, so will we be redeemed from our Golus. The Torah is laying that foundation for us.

We know this to be true because the Torah does not merely state that the twins were born; it includes details about the hand of Zerach coming out and receiving a scarlet bracelet, then Peretz's whole body coming out first, followed by Zerach. Then the Torah states that the hand that came out first (Zerach) came out first, i.e., this one is the "older one," but the Torah does not call that child the bechor. This story parallels the story of Yakov and Esav, the battle between the older and the younger, and the prophecy to Rivka that the older will serve the younger. And as I've expounded on in the past, the 'younger' seemingly weaker, ends up the leaders, much like the Jews (progeny of Yakov) will eventually overrule Esav. Even Yosef's dreams, as a younger brother who his older brothers will serve, are in line with the prophecy. The similarities and

the reference to Mashiach are too perfect for the story not to be mentioned here. Concerning the actual episode, there are ways to explain that since Tamar may never have consummated her marriages to Yehuda's sons, and therefore status-wise she may have been the daughter-in-law, but the final stage to make her that status may not have happened; furthermore, this did take place before the Torah, so this type of relationship may not have been forbidden. The fact that the Torah uses descriptors to present the story as sketchy is in the fashion that Hashem shows us that the merits of those who come before us are what they are. We have to do what we have to do, regardless of the past, especially if it is a situation we may not understand. Some midrashim explain the union was forced by an angel against Yehuda's will, because the Davidic dynasty, and with it Mashiach, needed to be born.

A final point, according to Chassidus, Tamar represents the Jewish people (just as a Tamar-palm has one heart), redemption, and repentance. Our repentance and blessings for the year from Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur culminate on Chanukah, which we are about to celebrate. This story, then, reflects our journey of connecting and reconnecting with Hashem, and sealing our fate for a fantastic year ahead as we usher in Chanukah. But, as mentioned earlier, this story is also about the birth of Mashiach's progenitor. It therefore must serve to remind us that the light of

Chanukah, and the light of Mashiach must shine forth, as we've spent long enough in our exile.

May we welcome Mashiach now,
Good Shabbos and Happy Chanukah

**The following is a thought I wrote
about 19-20 Kislev, which we
celebrated earlier this week:**

19-20 Kislev and Parshas Vayeishev

I am writing this as someone who, although Chabad, grew up attending non-Lubavitch Mosdos in the city where I was raised. My primary time at day school was after Gimmel Tammuz, when the non-Lubavitch Frum Jewish world was at war with Lubavitchers and Chabad in an age-old fight that began with the Alter Rebbe.

I am writing this word, because of something I heard at a 19 Kislev Farbrengen, that the Alter Rebbe's choice after he was released was not to fight the people who perpetrated his suffering, even so much as attending "Avigdor's" house (mistakenly going there, rather than the Chassid upstairs), to be berated for 3 hours before the Alter Rebbe's troupe realized where he was. The Alter Rebbe commented that the 50+ days in jail paled in comparison to the three hours with the "Misnaged," who, despite the suffering he caused, and despite the miraculous salvation of the Alter Rebbe, chose to berate the Rebbe, causing further suffering¹. Despite all this, the Alter Rebbe told his Chassidim (and, with that, us) to focus on moving forward and

¹ When Yakov left Lavan's house, despite Lavan having a dream not to start up with Yakov, Lavan still remained an idol worshipper. Meaning Lavan was so engrossed in himself, even though Hashem came to him in a dream, he couldn't change. You would think the Misnaged, after causing so much

harm, and the potential death sentence on a fellow Yid, would have turned around, but no, a Misnaged is so engrossed in himself, even Hashem cannot change him. This is not to say there aren't good Misnagedim, or pious ones...

spreading light, and not to cause harm to another Yid. But fast-forward 250 years, and there is a sentiment among Misnagedim that remains alive, one I grew up in and know well. The point, though, of what I am writing is something else.

Every day in school was a challenge. I had Rabbeim who would purposefully make my day hell for being a Lubavitcher (this was especially true when I began growing a beard after my bar mitzvah)—every Single Day, bullied, without fail. I write this not for empathy but to make a specific point. Despite the challenges and threats to personal safety. I had a fire burning within me that knew the truth. The truth is that I have a Rebbe and I have Chassidus. What this means is that, during my dark times, I used to think the reason I was being made to go through this experience was that I had something special. And the truth is, we do have something special. Heaven only knows, the tools we have to be strong Jews despite the darkness around us, even if that darkness is by fellow Jews. My writing isn't to critique that internal self-hatred of Jews; rather, it is to say, we as Chassidim don't even realize the tools we have. Some people can only know this if they've been exposed to it. When you don't know, let me tell you with authority, you have the tools for greatness in your own personal life, most specifically, about being the best Jew you can be.

Even a simple explanation of the Rebbe from a Sicha, that has been repeated a million times by bochurim to shuls on Tahlucha, or in offices when bochurim are doing Mivtzoim, those simple words, that we take for granted, are eons greater as an asset to strengthen our Yiddishkeit than the alternative that is without it. Only now, in our time, are Farbrengens

happening in Lakewood and other non-Chabad communities that have finally been exposed to the greatness of the Chassidus given to us by our Rebbes. Specifically, after celebrating 19-20 Kislev. The whole Kitrog that the Alter Rebbe had to suffer for was because the world was not, in the opinion of the heavens, ready for Chassidus. Still, since the wellsprings had begun to flow after 19-20 Kislev, it became incumbent on us to make the wellspring burst, not merely flow. Finally, our adversarial environment is recognizing that Chassidus, and specifically Chabad Chassidus, serves as a tool to help us through golus and remain steadfastly focused on the mission: the mission of our Rebbe to bring Mashiach.

Why am I writing this? I was sitting at a 19 Kislev Farbrengen and realised that, although I felt uninspired at the moment, I needed to understand what was missing. The Mashpia's focus was heavily on ideas that didn't seem to connect with those sitting around. Moreover, the most interesting part of the Farbrengen was hearing about the events leading up to the Alter Rebbe's arrest, and the attitude of another Jew who could go so far as to put the Alter Rebbe in danger. Then, when I heard about the three hours the Alter Rebbe spent in the Misnaged's presence—time he mockingly said was worse than his days in jail—it dawned on me. People, you must understand that the tools given by the Baal Shem Tov, whose disciple the Alter Rebbe was, and who was told that the wellsprings of Chassidus must burst forth, have provided us, all these years later, with the tools to succeed and to become the best version of ourselves we can be—both as individuals and, most importantly, as Jews. You don't need to look elsewhere

for inspiration or think that the grass is greener on the other side. We have everything.

In conclusion, shift your lens and look at any seforim shelf with a Tanya, Torah Ohr, Lekutei Torah, Sefer Sichos, Lekutei Sichos, Mamarim, etc. and see that you have the most precious golden Torah to *Chap Arein*, and harness, and live with, and use to be the best version you can be, despite life's challenges and the Avoda of being a human.

May this year's 19-20 Kislev celebration not just be a day in the calendar for us, but the point of reflection where we look at the gift of Chassidus we were given, and be inspired to use the tools the Rebbes gave us, specifically our Rebbe, because we are Dor Shevii, and may we see the face of Mashiach now.

Good Yom Tov.