

Vayaishev 5774

BS"D Parashat Vayaishev 5774

This message is directed to the young men and women still residing in the various Jewish communities in the lands of our exile.

The close to 6000 years of human existence are replete with great dramas of individuals and nations.

The expulsion of Adam and Chava and hence all humanity from Gan Eden. The devastating deluge in the time of Noach. The vast movements of peoples to unsettled areas of the globe, in the time of the Tower of Babel. Men of profound thought whose words were mightier than the swords of despots, and men with wings of angels and others with pitchforks of devils.

Only HaShem Himself can gauge the input of an event or a society on the long-range development of humanity.

But, as dramatic as so many of these global events were, none can compare with the greatest story of them all: the 2000 years of Jewish survival, overcoming unspeakable persecution at the ruthless hands of Christianity and Islam, climaxing with our unparalleled return to our God-given ancient homeland of Eretz Yisrael.

I shall, please God, return to this.

The brothers arrived in Egypt and are accused by the Viceroy himself of spying.

It was Yosef's intention to severely punish them, but something happened to change his mind from punishing them to caring for their welfare.

When reviewing Yosef's life, one cannot but wonder how he was able to overcome all his trials – orphaned from his beloved

mother Rachel, rejected by his brothers, and with only his father Ya'akov and younger brother Binyamin to bring him solace.

When Yosef appeared in Emek Dotan near Shechem, his brothers stripped him of his many-colored cloak and threw him into a serpent-infested pit. Yosef was sold into slavery, put to the test with Potifar's wife and thrown into prison for 12 years.

At any point in his early life, Yosef could easily have concluded that HaShem had abandoned him if not for one subtle, seemingly insignificant incident.

Yosef was sold to a caravan of Yishmaelim on its scheduled route from Gilad to Egypt. The Torah informs us that on this particular run, the caravan did not carry its usual cargo of kerosene but rather three pleasant-smelling spices (tzari, nachot and lot).

Rashi explains that HaShem created a mixup in Gilad replacing the kerosene with the spices, so that Yosef would not be troubled by the foul smell of kerosene.

How bizarre that HaShem chose to placate the 17-year-old Yosef, who is betrayed by his brothers and tied to a camel under a brutally hot sun to be sold as a slave, with pleasant smelling spices!

The answer can be found in the Louvre Museum in Paris. There is a painting of a smiling young woman, which at first glance might only appear to be worth a few thousand shekels. As the viewer gets closer, the scribbled signature of Leonardo Da Vinci comes into focus. His magnificent handiwork is the Mona Lisa worth millions of dollars. The value of the portrait skyrocketed simply because of a scribbled signature with no esthetic value but with the knowledge that it had been created by one of the world's greatest artists.

Yosef's situation was bleak, but he sensed HaShem's signature

through the sweet-smelling spices in place of the foul kerosene. Yosef then knew that he would be blessed with Divine protection.

In parshat Miketz, Yosef orders the brothers to bring Binyamin to him.

Ya'akov is extremely distraught by the turn of events, when he must now send away the last living memory of his beloved wife Rachel. As the brothers prepare to leave, Ya'akov sends them with a gift of tzari, nachot and lot for the Viceroy. The very same spices which had been transported by the caravan taking Yosef into slavery.

The brothers return to Egypt, and Yosef prepares to inflict psychological torment on those who inflicted him with so much pain.

At that moment, the brothers present him with their father's gift. Yosef opens the package and smells the unique spices. Suddenly, he sees himself again chained to the camel, with the sun intensely beating down on him, while sensing the unique mix of the 3 spices. Yosef recalls the signature declaring that all his suffering was part of HaShem's master plan in which the descendants of Avraham would be enslaved in a foreign land and eventually return to Eretz Yisrael. At that point, Yosef forgives his brothers.

The history of our people over the last 2000 years saw the majority of us exiled from Eretz Yisrael. We were sold into slavery, beaten, starved, and were victims of crusades, pogroms, expulsions, inquisitions and concentration camps.

At the end of the Second World War, the Jewish nation was physically and spiritually destitute. How could we survive?

Then HaShem showed us His signature, signifying that He was with us throughout our entire history – the signature was Medinat Yisrael.

In 1948, the Medina was a small signature, a mere scribble on the map of the world – like the sweet delicate smells of tzari, nachot and lot. But this small splinter of a state defeated seven standing armies. In the Six Day War, Tzahal was a big stick expanding our borders three fold; and for the first time in over 2000 years we were again sovereign over Yerushalayim. In the Yom Kippur War, Tzahal became a powerful club defeating the enemy comprised of Arab armies with their Soviet advisors and sophisticated weapons.

An authentic rabbinic leader is not only erudite in the written word, but is endowed with the intuitive ability to identify and interpret the signature of Hashem. The essential task of rabbis still in the galut is to interpret the Divine signature of the Medina and lead his community back to Eretz Yisrael.

To return to the young people to whom this message is directed.

You are a vital element in the ongoing saga of our nation. Regardless of where you were born or whose citizenship you hold, you will forever be a Jew in the eyes of the Halacha and in the eyes of your gentile neighbors.

How can you stand aside when history is beckoning to you? Where is the passion and adventure of youth?

The young today study, plan and work for the time they will be old and retire, while the elderly dress and act as teenagers in order to feel the freedom and vitality of youth.

Medinat Yisrael is the greatest challenge and opportunity presented by God to His people since the days of our return from Persia to rebuild the Second Temple, and the days of the Chanuka Maccabees who drove out their Greek oppressors and achieved independence for over 250 years.

This blessed land of Israel can provide you with study and

employment opportunities which you can perform for your own people, and not to spend your efforts on those who share little love for the Jewish nation.

Disregard the empty and even negative words of your rabbis and teachers. Share your ambitions and dreams with your parents and ask for their blessings for your success in “going up” (aliya) to Eretz Yisrael. They will follow and thank you for your leadership in bringing your family from the galut to the dream-fulfilling land of our fathers.

Shabbat Shalom

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