

Vayigash 5779

BS"D Parashat Vayigash 5779

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Still Fighting for Our Survival

Jews often wonder, "Even now, after returning to our God-given homeland following 2000 years of repression and degradation, why must we still fight for our survival. Rebono Shel Olam – Isn't enough?"

The answer is an emphatic NO!

I will explain:

In parashat Beshalach, Shimon and Levi annihilate the residents of Shechem for failing to bring Shechem ben Chamor to justice for what he did to their sister Dina.

What was behind this seemingly excessive and disproportionate reaction by two nice Jewish boys?

Avraham Aveinu arrived in Eretz Yisrael over 100 years before, where he was met by the pagan, tribal descendants of Cham, son of Noach: The Canaani, Chieti, Emori, etc.

Despite the religious and cultural opposition of these pagans, Avraham made impressive advances in the teachings of monotheism; even establishing a yeshiva-hotel where many gathered to hear the word of God.

This was anathema to the religious and political

establishment. Avraham was undermining the core beliefs of society by introducing God and morality to matters such as family, law, treatment of slaves, ethics in business and more.

At the time of parashat Vayishlach, the charismatic Avraham and his wife Sarah were long gone. Yitzchak was old and disabled. Ya'akov, the ben Torah, had not been seen in Eretz Yisrael for over twenty years. The only relevant descendant of Avraham was Aisav, with whom the idolaters got along fabulously, considering him as one of their own.

For all intents and purposes, Yiddishkeit was no longer a threat to the religious and social fabric of the land. The idolatrous natives could happily return to their old ways, uninterrupted by pangs of conscience or guilt caused by those "holier-than-thou" Jews.

Suddenly, Ya'akov the Jew and his family reappear in Eretz Yisrael.

His arrival could have been restrained and muted like that of our Zionist chalutzim (pioneers) at the beginning of the last century, when they bought "a dunam here and a dunam there", built a house here and a house there, planted orange trees and drained swampland, with no impressive message signaling their presence.

However, HaShem "speaks" to people in the language that they understand. To Am Yisrael, HaShem speaks in the language we comprehend – as a father teaching Torah. To the gentiles, HaShem speaks in the language that they comprehend – the language of strength, aggression and violence.

Ya'akov returned. The evil inhabitants of Shechem were felled by the swords of Shimon and Levi in the name of common decency and justice.

It took less than a day for the electrifying news of Shechem's destruction at the hands of Ya'akov to reach all the land and

beyond.

From then on, the Canaanite occupiers of Eretz Yisrael would have to learn that life in the Holy Land would no longer be the same.

HaShem, the ultimate playwright, brought about Ya'akov's return to the stage of history in an explosive manner. The reappearance of the Jewish people and their zealous conduct in the name of good over evil created the desired impression upon the descendants of Cham. It was the language the gentile understood – the language of strength.

When Ya'akov and his 69 relatives left the Holy Land to join Yosef in Egypt, the land was once again devoid of Jews and Judaism. It was not until 250 years later, under the leadership of Moshe and Yehoshua, that the two superpowers of Og, King of Bashan and Sichon, King of Emori were annihilated and 31 idolatrous city states were destroyed.

The news reverberated throughout the Middle East and beyond. The world was in shock! The Jews have returned! "Moral conscience has returned to haunt us. Where have we gone wrong?" was the pitiful wailing of the sons and daughters of Cham.

Once again, the chosen of HaShem reentered the land, not by a "dunam here and dunam there," but in the language of strength that the gentiles understood.

For the last 2000 years, the main body of the Jewish nation was in exile, with only a small remnant remaining in the land.

With the Holocaust, our enemies were certain that it was only a matter of time before the world again would be "free" of the "conscience-arousing" teachings of Judaism. The "Wandering Jew" would soon become the "Vanished Jew".

Then in 1948, the Jewish nation in Eretz Yisrael again leaped

onto the platform of history with an explosion that caught the attention of the world.

On the day following our declaration of statehood, the nascent Jewish State was invaded by seven Arab armies in the "War of Independence".

The world was certain that 600,000 people with only a ragtag army, no air force and no mechanized armaments would not be able to withstand the ferocious Arab onslaught.

But despite an arms boycott on Israel enforced by the United States and European countries, Israel trounced the Arab forces; doubling the land area of the State.

The world stood in awe – Ya'akov had returned home!

In 1967, we were again in existential danger. The combined forces of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and others, had sworn to erase Israel from the map. It took two hours in the morning of June 6th, 1967 to demonstrate to the world what King David wrote (Tehillim 20,8-9):

Those come with chariots and those with horses. And we come in the name of the LORD, our God.

They have bowed down and fallen, and we have risen and stood upright.

News of the Medina's miraculous military victories and its development at the cutting edge of almost every scientific and intellectual field has reached the far corners of the world.

In the not so distant future the God of Yisrael, through the Medina, will again put the world into a state of shock when we will destroy all those who now seek to uproot the Jewish people from our God-given homeland.

In time, Medinat Yisrael will be HaShem's medium to bring His

message of Torah to all Jews, and the Noachide laws and hope to a fractured, dissonant gentile world.

Welcome home, Ya'akov. Baruchim Haba'im, the holy people of Am Yisrael.

Finding Clarity

Often, we are challenged by situations which are beyond our comprehension. Why did this happen to me? Where did I go wrong? How can I extricate myself from this maze of spider webs? And then a moment of clarity arrives, and all the pieces fall into place.

We find a perfect example of this in parshat Vayigash. The brothers are crazed by the circumstances being spun around them for no rational reason. What began as a commercial trip to Egypt to purchase food was now turning into an absolute calamity.

They were compelled to convince their elderly father to part with his beloved Binyamin for a limited time. However, when circumstances contrived to imprison Binyamin for life, they could not return to their father without Binyamin! "Where is the God of our father Ya'akov, of our grandfather Yitzchak and the God of our patriarch Avraham?"

Then, in one moment, the Viceroy of Egypt rose from his throne and called out two words – "ANI YOSEF," – I am Yosef – and all that had transpired became crystal clear.

Ya'akov ponders why did misfortune befall him and his righteous family? He survived more than 20 years with the evil betrayer Lavan and escaped the diabolical plans of his brother Aisav. So, what went wrong so that his holy daughter had to undergo such an atrocious experience, and his sons were forced to take so many lives?

In reply to this, Rashi (35,1) quotes a short sentence from the Midrash Tanchuma which explains all: