

Vayigash Chanuka 5774

BS"D Parashat Vayigash Chanuka 5774

It has all the ingredients of a best-selling novel or a blockbuster movie: sibling rivalry, a life-threatening scene in a pit of serpents, an unexpected rescue, degradation in the slave market, a beautiful seductress and her jealous husband, incarceration for life, a surprise release, ascent to international fame and power, and then, sweet revenge.

These are the elements in the story of Yosef and his brothers. What is it doing in the Holy Torah?

The question becomes even more enigmatic in view of the first Rashi in the Torah, which defines the purpose of the book of Bereshiet.

Rashi quotes Rav Yitzchak of the Midrash, who states that since the Torah is the HaShem-given book of law for Am Yisrael, it should begin with the first mitzva revealed to Moshe – calculating the months, years and leap years – and not with the episode of creation.

Rav Yitzchak explains that the Torah begins with creation for one 'simple' purpose: to inform the world that HaShem, as the Creator and Master of all, may give Eretz Yisrael to whom He wishes. So in the event that the nations point an accusing finger at us for 'stealing' the Holy Land, we should reply that HaShem created the world and, for a time, gave Eretz Yisrael to the Canaanites, then retrieved it from them and gave it to us.

As stated above, the story of Yosef and his brothers seemingly has no place in a book dedicated to assuring that Eretz Yisrael belongs to the Jewish nation! However, I would suggest that the opposite is true – the story of Yosef gives credence to the postulate that HaShem's gift of Eretz Yisrael to us is

eternal and indisputable.

Yosef had two visions that he would one day rule the Jewish people. Parshat Va'yashev records that his brothers were jealous to the point of intense hatred, but "aviv sha'mar et ha'davar" – his father Yaakov (as Rashi cites) knew it was a true decree from HaShem, and so Yaakov bided his time until it would become reality.

For there was something Yaakov knew from personal experience that his sons were not aware of. It was a lesson he had learned from his mother, Rivka, when she convinced him to circumvent his brother Esav in order to receive their father's blessing even against her husband's expressed wishes to bless Esav.

When Rivka was suffering in her pregnancy, she went "to ask of HaShem." She was informed that she would give birth to twins, who would be the progenitors of great rival nations – with the older (Esav) serving the younger (Yaakov). Rivka knew that since this was a decree from HaShem, no force in the world could stop it from being realized. The moral basis for Rivka's actions and her absolute confidence in its success were founded on the revelation that this was HaShem's decree.

Ramban, in his commentary on Bereshiet 37:15, puts it very succinctly: **Ha'ge'zayra emet ve'ha'chari'tzut sheker** – "HaShem's decree is true (absolute), and human efforts to thwart it are false (i.e., can never succeed)." When Yaakov heard Yosef's dreams and "waited for their realization," he was acting in accordance with the lesson of Rivka and the principle stated by Ramban – that HaShem's decree will be realized, and no manner of human effort can negate it.

Eventually, Yaakov lives to see Yosef as master over his brothers. The brothers learn that despite their 'best' efforts to rid themselves of the threat imposed by Yosef's presence in the family, HaShem's decree will be done!

The Torah records the story of Yosef and his brothers as a completion of what was stated by Rav Yitzchak as cited in the first Rashi of the Torah – the Holy Land of Eretz Yisrael, with Yerushalayim as the “gateway to heaven,” is decreed by HaShem as belonging to the Jewish nation, and no power on earth or in heaven can negate this decree.

Notwithstanding the fact that the small number of Jews in Eretz Yisrael today are politically isolated, militarily outnumbered, surrounded by Islamic insanity, threatened by world-wide anti-Jewishness, and abandoned by millions of our brothers who prefer to stay away and leave the few of us to fulfill HaShem’s decree, HaShem’s decree will be realized. When the Holy Temple will adorn the “top of the mountains” (the words of Yeshayahu), and Eretz Yisrael will extend to the banks of the Euphrates and the Nile, and the Land will be filled with Torah study (as in the days of King Chizkiyahu, as per Sanhedrin 94:b) and the spirit of HaShem will embrace every Jew here, then Rivka, Yaakov, and the brothers (and Ramban) will carry on their shoulders the few in Eretz Yisrael who believed that “the decree is true, and human efforts to thwart it are false.”

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Part A:

The parasha describes the electrifying moment when the Viceroy of Egypt cries out to his 11 frightened, bewildered brothers: “I am Yosef! Is my father still alive?!”

The rapprochement of the brothers and Yosef, known in Egypt as tzafnat pa’a’nai’ach (the revealer of hidden secrets), was the furthest thing from the minds of the 11 brothers, and perhaps even from Yosef himself. What occurred at that fateful moment that compelled Yosef to reveal himself?

The pasuk reads: וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוּדָה וַיֵּצֵא אֶת אֶחָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו – translated as, “And Yehuda approached him”.

The root (shoresh) of the word vayigash – Nun-Gimel-Shin – contains within it two ideas: to approach or to engage in conflict .(ויגש)

Rashi cites both meanings in his commentary: Yehuda approached Yosef either to prevent others from hearing his words, or threatened to enter into physical conflict with Yosef.

Both scenarios – the intimate plea of Yehuda to the Viceroy to spare the old father any more suffering in a long life beset with remorse and mourning, or the possibility that Yosef might have to set his troops against his own brothers – sufficed to compel Yosef to reveal his true identity.

Whatever the reality, the developments and surprise ending could never have been anticipated by any of the participants. These kinds of scenarios are the spellbinding, tell-telling signs of HaShem's intervention in human affairs.

HaShem is the “Master” of the impossible. Indeed He creates the impossible and then unravels it.

HaShem created all that exists “yesh me'ayin” (*creatio ex nihilo* – *existence out of nothing*). This is beyond the ability of created Man, who can only rearrange the physical state of an existing entity, but can neither create from nothing nor turn an existing physical entity into nothing.

Indeed, Hashem creates entities even more dramatic than *creatio ex nihilo* a state of nothingness – zero – where neither good nor evil prevail. But in the affairs of His chosen people Yisrael, HaShem goes a step further, when from out of a state less than nothingness – a state of minus when the profane and evil threatens the Jewish people, He creates salvation and life from the evil itself.

Part B:

The Midrash (Bamidbar parashat Chukat chapter 19) describes a

phenomena which is solely in the realm of Hashem, where the Creator orchestrates history by employing evil to produce good.

אברהם , משה , דוד , ישיעיהו , יחזקאל , משה , אהרן ,
היהוה , משה , דוד , ישיעיהו , יחזקאל , משה , אהרן ,
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Avraham born from Terech, King Chizkiyahu from Achaz, King Yoshiyahu from Amon, Mordechai from Shi'mie, The Jewish nation from idolators, the World to come from out of this world. Who is able to perform these things? Only HaShem Himself.

Moshe turned the bitter waters of Marah sweet by inserting a bitter branch into the water. King David, the great grandson of Ruth who was a direct descendant of the evil Eglon King of Moav. The descendants of Haman studied Torah in Bnei Brak. The descendants of Sisrah taught Torah to the children of Yerushalayim and Shemaya and Avtalyon descendants of Sancheriv the Assyrian were the teachers of the great Hillel.

Part C:

Medinat Yisrael is now in the midst of being betrayed by those whom we believed to be our staunchest supporters. It is no secret that the Shi'ite Iranians vow to wipe Israel off the map of the world, and they unflinchingly and brazenly labor to create the means to do so. Our so-called "friends and allies" are turning their backs and disregard the existential threats which the Medina is facing. This includes their energizing of the fantasies entertained by Arabs in Yehuda and Shomron and even the Arab citizens of the State.

The future will show that the source of the evil itself will be the avenue for our salvation, in a way only our Father-in-Heaven can orchestrate.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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