

## *Parshas Vayigash* *Transcended Love*

A MAN BANGS HIS HEAD REPEATEDLY WITH A HAMMER, ASKED WHY, HE RESPONDS, "BECAUSE IT FEELS SO GOOD WHEN I STOP" —HEARD

---



f all the illuminating and insightful Midrashim found on Sefer Bereishis,

there is none that is both as well known and troubling as is the following comment brought by Rashi (45:29): "...but Yaakov did not fall on Joseph's neck nor did he kiss him...because he recited, then, the Shma".

By now most of us have heard the explanation given by R. Menachem Mendel of Kotzk - that Yaakov wanted to take this powerful, once in a lifetime emotion, and channel it to G-d.

However, on a very basic and human level, the question remains, why now? Indeed Yoseph himself was struck by his fathers actions, or lack thereof, as the Sefer Akeida teaches, upon seeing his father being seemingly unmoved by this reunion, Yoseph wept even more.

What makes this question so perturbing is not just the inability to relate to such a lofty reflex, rather, when considering the subject, Yaakov, and his temperament, this action, or inaction, seems out of place in the extreme. For consider, Yaakov, upon meeting Rachel was so overwhelmed with a spiritual love, that he kissed her; Yaakov, so enamored by his young son, his potential and similarities to himself, that he, seemingly reflexively, showed him and gave him more emotional love and attention; Yaakov was never the proverbial distant, cold father, locked in his own world, rather Yaakov was an open man, rebuking his children and wives when necessary and losing his closeness with G-d –his

Moshe Taub//[yaadbuffalo@yahoo.com](mailto:yaadbuffalo@yahoo.com)

Chidushei Torah in the form of Drashos//do not copy without express permission.

Nevuah - due to his endless sadness and mourning for his son Yoseph. Yet, it is *this same* Yaakov, this personality, that, we are told, was able to, and wanted to, ignore this reunion on an emotional level? It simply does not match with the past 22 years of his sitting in sackcloth, nor with any other part of his life.

---

*W*

e are all products of our lives. Statements made by Talmudic rabbis

always seem to match their experiences and indeed this is how many of the great commentators explain them. Yaakov too had to learn, in a very real and hard way, about loss. It was precisely this same man that knew how to give himself over emotionally, who opened himself up to such intense vulnerability, who in turn suffered in a profound way when he experienced their loss. After all these years of mourning –he thought his son as dead – he caught himself, and realized that he was out of emotional currency and can no longer afford to be vulnerable to loss – we saw the seeds of this metamorphosis by Yaakov’s resistance in sending away Binyamin, compared to the “old” Yaakov who was the one to send Yoseph out, alone, to check on his brothers.

But this was not only an autonomous change customized for his particular circumstance and emotional and mental well-being, this was a lesson, as well, that he taught to Yoseph, and to us through the ages; we can become Viceroys of our countries, raise beautiful children in America, but this is *not* home, we have not “arrived” and great danger lies in attachment, and, as history has shown, we could, Lo Aleinu, lose it all in an instant.

We read and hear stories; Rabbi J.B. Soleveichik writes that he can not recall his father ever kissing him, and others like it and we laugh at the coldness of Litvaks, never considering that over years of European crusades and pogroms, our parents, and theirs before them, learned that all can disappear in a flash, so they guarded themselves with a harsh defensive shield, showing us as well that until that *Great Day*, we can never attach ourselves to the point of no return.

This is not to say never to love, to care and give of self. Rather to understand what it was the Kotzker Rebbe, briefly referenced above, was trying to say: *Love, but know that it is the love of G-d that protects this love.*

Moshe Taub//[yaadbuffalo@yahoo.com](mailto:yaadbuffalo@yahoo.com)

Chidushei Torah in the form of Drashos//do not copy without express permission.

The Dubna Maggid once gave a Moshel:

*A king, frustrated with the prince's uncomely behavior, finally banishes him from the kingdom. The son for years lived on the outskirts of town, poor and lonely. One day the king sends builders contractors etc. to meet up with the prince. "We are here to build you a home, by the order of the king, so you can be warm and comfortable". The son begins to weep, "Until now", he explains, "I always had the hope my father would take me back. Now, that he is building me a home here, giving me permanence in my exile, I know I will never be going back".*

Yaakov's life represented Galus. Yoseph represented the seeds of Israel's first exile. Yoseph had it all, fame, fortune and a family. They embrace. Yoseph thought that this is it, *it does not get better than this moment*. To Yaakov it felt very different, for they were now in Egypt, his entire family of 70 souls was ripped from their home land, and this reunion needed a stark, and perhaps awkward and unnerving reminder of what *was* missing, as well as what could in an instant *become* lost.

Perhaps now we can better understand why, in next week's Parshah (Vayeichy), when Yaakov, after his Ruach Hakodesh suddenly departs and he fears one of his children is not worthy of blessings, is comforted by the unified voice of the Shevatim as they recite, as well, *the first Pasuk of Shma*. What in affect they were saying was, "We too got the message, and we too will put Galus in its proper perspective."

Indeed, history informs us that Yaakov's message has been accepted beyond his time: whether it is Rebbe Akiva's exclamation while being executed or the thousands after him who died Al Kiddush Hashem, **they all chose those very same words to describe what was being lost, being gained and being taught at those ominous, yet auspicious, moments.**

My father always taught me, "never end a Drashah on a depressing note", but it is our *current* challenge that reminds us why we should be cautiously optimistic. We are Zocheh to need Yaakov's message in its truest sense, not in paucity but in abundance, like Yoseph. Many, here, in this country, need this reminder not because of heartbreak, rather to learn *how* to appreciate what we *do* have - the superfluity of our time - and how to perceive it through the prism of an eternal love, a G-dly love, a love that we are never vulnerable to.

So, we remind ourselves thrice daily, yes in comfort, but with the keen understanding of how much deeper that same love could be felt and appreciated if it were celebrated in its *home*, Yerushalaim HaBnuyah, a Jerusalem impenetrable to loss and destruction.

## *Parshas Vayigash* *Transcended Love*

A MAN BANGS HIS HEAD REPEATEDLY WITH A HAMMER, ASKED WHY, HE RESPONDS, "BECAUSE IT FEELS SO GOOD WHEN I STOP" —HEARD

---



f all the illuminating and insightful Midrashim found on Sefer Bereishis,

there is none that is both as well known and troubling as is the following comment brought by Rashi (45:29): "...but Yaakov did not fall on Joseph's neck nor did he kiss him...because he recited, then, the Shma".

By now most of us have heard the explanation given by R. Menachem Mendel of Kotzk - that Yaakov wanted to take this powerful, once in a lifetime emotion, and channel it to G-d.

However, on a very basic and human level, the question remains, why now? Indeed Yoseph himself was struck by his fathers actions, or lack thereof, as the Sefer Akeida teaches, upon seeing his father being seemingly unmoved by this reunion, Yoseph wept even more.

What makes this question so perturbing is not just the inability to relate to such a lofty reflex, rather, when considering the subject, Yaakov, and his temperament, this action, or inaction, seems out of place in the extreme. For consider, Yaakov, upon meeting Rachel was so overwhelmed with a spiritual love, that he kissed her; Yaakov, so enamored by his young son, his potential and similarities to himself, that he, seemingly reflexively, showed him and gave him more emotional love and attention; Yaakov was never the proverbial distant, cold father, locked in his own world, rather Yaakov was an open man, rebuking his children and wives when necessary and losing his closeness with G-d –his

Moshe Taub//[yaadbuffalo@yahoo.com](mailto:yaadbuffalo@yahoo.com)

Chidushei Torah in the form of Drashos//do not copy without express permission.

Nevuah - due to his endless sadness and mourning for his son Yoseph. Yet, it is *this same* Yaakov, this personality, that, we are told, was able to, and wanted to, ignore this reunion on an emotional level? It simply does not match with the past 22 years of his sitting in sackcloth, nor with any other part of his life.

---

*W*

e are all products of our lives. Statements made by Talmudic rabbis

always seem to match their experiences and indeed this is how many of the great commentators explain them. Yaakov too had to learn, in a very real and hard way, about loss. It was precisely this same man that knew how to give himself over emotionally, who opened himself up to such intense vulnerability, who in turn suffered in a profound way when he experienced their loss. After all these years of mourning –he thought his son as dead – he caught himself, and realized that he was out of emotional currency and can no longer afford to be vulnerable to loss – we saw the seeds of this metamorphosis by Yaakov’s resistance in sending away Binyamin, compared to the “old” Yaakov who was the one to send Yoseph out, alone, to check on his brothers.

But this was not only an autonomous change customized for his particular circumstance and emotional and mental well-being, this was a lesson, as well, that he taught to Yoseph, and to us through the ages; we can become Viceroys of our countries, raise beautiful children in America, but this is *not* home, we have not “arrived” and great danger lies in attachment, and, as history has shown, we could, Lo Aleinu, lose it all in an instant.

We read and hear stories; Rabbi J.B. Soleveichik writes that he can not recall his father ever kissing him, and others like it and we laugh at the coldness of Litvaks, never considering that over years of European crusades and pogroms, our parents, and theirs before them, learned that all can disappear in a flash, so they guarded themselves with a harsh defensive shield, showing us as well that until that *Great Day*, we can never attach ourselves to the point of no return.

This is not to say never to love, to care and give of self. Rather to understand what it was the Kotzker Rebbe, briefly referenced above, was trying to say: *Love, but know that it is the love of G-d that protects this love.*

Moshe Taub//[yaadbuffalo@yahoo.com](mailto:yaadbuffalo@yahoo.com)

Chidushei Torah in the form of Drashos//do not copy without express permission.

The Dubna Maggid once gave a Moshel:

*A king, frustrated with the prince's uncomely behavior, finally banishes him from the kingdom. The son for years lived on the outskirts of town, poor and lonely. One day the king sends builders contractors etc. to meet up with the prince. "We are here to build you a home, by the order of the king, so you can be warm and comfortable". The son begins to weep, "Until now", he explains, "I always had the hope my father would take me back. Now, that he is building me a home here, giving me permanence in my exile, I know I will never be going back".*

Yaakov's life represented Galus. Yoseph represented the seeds of Israel's first exile. Yoseph had it all, fame, fortune and a family. They embrace. Yoseph thought that this is it, *it does not get better than this moment*. To Yaakov it felt very different, for they were now in Egypt, his entire family of 70 souls was ripped from their home land, and this reunion needed a stark, and perhaps awkward and unnerving reminder of what *was* missing, as well as what could in an instant *become* lost.

Perhaps now we can better understand why, in next week's Parshah (Vayeichy), when Yaakov, after his Ruach Hakodesh suddenly departs and he fears one of his children is not worthy of blessings, is comforted by the unified voice of the Shevatim as they recite, as well, *the first Pasuk of Shma*. What in affect they were saying was, "We too got the message, and we too will put Galus in its proper perspective."

Indeed, history informs us that Yaakov's message has been accepted beyond his time: whether it is Rebbe Akiva's exclamation while being executed or the thousands after him who died Al Kiddush Hashem, **they all chose those very same words to describe what was being lost, being gained and being taught at those ominous, yet auspicious, moments.**

My father always taught me, "never end a Drashah on a depressing note", but it is our *current* challenge that reminds us why we should be cautiously optimistic. We are Zocheh to need Yaakov's message in its truest sense, not in paucity but in abundance, like Yoseph. Many, here, in this country, need this reminder not because of heartbreak, rather to learn *how* to appreciate what we *do* have - the superfluity of our time - and how to perceive it through the prism of an eternal love, a G-dly love, a love that we are never vulnerable to.

So, we remind ourselves thrice daily, yes in comfort, but with the keen understanding of how much deeper that same love could be felt and appreciated if it were celebrated in its *home*, Yerushalaim HaBnuyah, a Jerusalem impenetrable to loss and destruction.