



Parshas Vayigash 2019, the forgiving one's self

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of my grandmother, Shoshanna Bas Sholom, and my aunts, Chana Bas Yehuda and Leah Mintche Bas Ya'akov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

We pick up from the end of last week Parsha, where Benjamin was found to have Yosef's goblet. Yosef commanded that Benjamin remain in Egypt while the brothers were free to go back home.

At this point, our Parsha begins with Yeudah reacting to Yosef's command, he pleads with Yosef to take him as a slave instead. He explains that if he were to return home without Benjamin, his father would die from the agony of losing a second son.

Yosef could not restrain himself any longer; overcome with emotion, he asks all but his brothers to leave his presence. With both sorrow and happiness, he revealed his true identity to his brothers, ***"I am Yosef!"*** He then instructed them to return home quickly and bring their father and families back to Egypt.

The brothers were speechless, completely in shock and disarray; they could not believe that their brother was still alive. They started to tremble, fearing the punishment that Yosef would retaliate against them with. But instead, Yosef called them back to him, telling them that they were forgiven. At the moment he made history, he became the first person in the Torah to forgive.

When the brothers returned home, they told Ya'akov something he'd never thought he would hear in his lifetime: **Yosef is still alive!** Ya'akov was ecstatic and overjoyed, as the Pasuk says (45:27), *"And the spirit of their father, Ya'akov was revived."*

Before Ya'akov began his journey down to Egypt, Hashem appeared to him and said that He would go with him down to Egypt and make his family a great nation. Ya'akov then gathered his family and quickly traveled down to Egypt to his beloved son, Yosef.

However, a question comes to mind: When Yosef finally revealed his true identity, he said (45:3), *"I am Yosef, is my father still alive?!"* But didn't Yosef already know that Ya'akov was still alive from when he asked them in last week's Parsha?! As the Pasuk writes (43:27-28) *"he greeted them, and he said, "How is your father of whom you spoke of? Is he still in good health?"* They replied, *"It is well with your servant, our father; he is still in good health."* So why did Yosef ask his brothers again if their father was still alive?!

The Kli Yakar on this Pasuk writes that Yosef asked if Ya'akov was alive because he worried his brothers were lying to him. He thought they only spoke about Ya'akov's fragile health to obtain mercy and compassion for Benyamin. Therefore, when he ultimately revealed his identity, he first wanted to know the true condition of his father, Ya'akov.

However, the Lubavitcher Rebbe gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that Yosef knew Ya'akov was still alive from all their previous conversations. This is why he did not wait for them to answer his question when his brothers were speechless when they found out who he really was.

Rather, he reassured them that he harbors no ill feelings towards them and they should bring Ya'akov down to Egypt as soon as possible.

The Rebbe explains that Yosef asked about Ya'akov because he wanted to calm his brothers down. When he asked about their father, he was signaling to his brothers that although they may not be from the same mother, they are intrinsically connected through their father.

He will follow in their father's footsteps of being a man of words rather than violence. He will allow them to see the error of their ways and take responsibility rather than punish them for what he views as G-d's plan. By asking about Ya'akov, Yosef told his brothers that he had already forgiven them. Now they must work on forgiving themselves.

In our daily life and during such decisive times, we must remember that forgiveness is hard to achieve, but it is also difficult to give out. When someone has wronged us, we typically don't want to accept their apologies, no matter how hard they worked to get it.

However, we must learn to be more forgiving of others, especially if they beseech us and wish to atone for their mistakes. You could either hold the grudge forever or allow yourself the freedom to let go and move forward to accomplish bigger and greater achievements.

**“Forgive others not only because they deserve forgiveness
but because you deserve peace.”**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*