Points to Ponder

Vayigash 5779

**בִּ֣י אֲדֹנִי֒ יְדַבֶּר־נָ֨א עַבְדְּךָ֤ דָבָר֙ בְּאָזְנֵ֣י אֲדֹנִ֔י And Yehuda approached him and said, 'Please, sir, let your servant speak a word in the ears of my master.'" ( 44:18) - Rashi** explains that he spoke with Yosef harshly. This is troubling. We just left Yehuda in a conciliatory and almost pleading tone. Where does one see or expect such a dramatic shift? **Rav Amital ztl.** explains that while it is obvious that when trouble befalls the community, it represents a punishment which comes as a result of the evil deeds of the community, in the case of the individual this is not always so. Citing **Ramban** at the beginning of Iyov as a proof, Rav Amital explains that when Yehuda believed that the decree fell on all the brothers, he thought that the predicament was a punishment sent from God for which they would accept their fate. But when it became apparent that Yosef sought to apply his verdict to Binyamin alone, then it became possible that this was not a Divine decree at all but rather a regular, incidental event. If this was the case, then possibly the situation could be changed, and this prompted him to deliver his speech before Yosef.

**וְלֹא־יָֽכְל֤וּ אֶחָיו֙ לַֽעֲנ֣וֹת אֹת֔וֹ כִּ֥י נִבְהֲל֖וּ מִפָּנָֽיו: The brothers could not answer him because they were blown away from him (45:3) - Rav Schachter Shlita** would often remind us that because Yosef’s brothers were missing one piece of information, they couldn’t understand what was going on. The same occurs to in the history of the Jewish people -- there are so many things that occur in Jewish history that we do not understand. Sometimes we need to understand that we don’t understand. The Haftara also reminds us that in the future after all of Jewish History will be unfolded then we too will understand everything in context.

**וּבִ֨נְיָמִ֔ן בָּכָ֖ה עַל־צַוָּארָֽיו: And Binyamin cried on his neck (45:14) - Rashi** explains that Yosef cried for the 2 Battei Mikdash that he saw destroyed and Binyamin cried for the destruction of Shiloh. Why does the crying need to be explained? After all, the 2 brothers hadn’t seen one another for 22 years! And why can’t the tears be tears of joy!? **Rav Elya Svei ztl.** answers that the main purpose of having a Beis HaMikdash was for the entirety of Bnei Yisrael to have a place to come together and seek Rachamim from Hashem. Beis HaMikdash needed Achva (that’s why it could only be built in Binyamin’s Cheilek -- he was the only brother who was not involved in the sale of Yosef.) . When Yosef and Binyamin reunited, they certainly felt that sense of Achva but were suffering because their awareness that the Achva was not enough to fend off destruction was crushing to them. Thus, they cried for the destructions and the lack of Achvah that was the reason behind it.

**וַיַּרְא֙ אֶת־הָ֣עֲגָל֔וֹת He saw the wagons (45:27) - Rashi** explains that Yaakov was convinced by the sign that Yosef sent. But what is the connection between an Eglah and an Agala? **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl.** explains that the wagons were an indication of what Yosef was all about -- taking responsibility for the family. When Yosef would speak badly about the brothers, it was because he thought that it was his responsibility (albeit not a popular one). When he went to check on them, it was because of his sense of responsibility. And now, when Yaakov saw the wagons, he knew again that Yosef was taking responsibility for the family and he was relieved.

**My son Yosef is still alive (45:28) - Rav Shimshon Dovid Pinkus ztl.** noted that to Yaakov there was no honor in the fact that Yosef had achieved power and wealth. However, that he was Chai -- that he was alive with the spirit of Torah -- THAT was important to him. He knew, so to speak, that now someone could say Kaddish.

**וְאִם־יָדַ֗עְתָּ וְיֶשׁ־בָּם֙ אַנְשֵׁי־חַ֔יִל If you know that there are warriors among them (47:6)** - The Talmud (Berachos 63) notes that in the same manner that Pharaoh is credited with bringing the Jews close for his own purposes, one who invites Talmidei Chachamim into his home, respects them and takes care of their needs is certainly to be lauded. **Rav Dov Yaffe ztl.** Asked what the comparison is? The one inviting the Talmid Chacham is selfless. Pharaoh only acted in his own self-interest! Rav Yaffe answers that even when something is done for one’s self interest, if it benefits you, you need to offer Hakaras Hatov.

**מְעַ֣ט וְרָעִ֗ים Few and bad (47:9) - Ramban** asks why Yaakov seems to be giving up on the remaining time that he had. Why**? Rav Mattisyahu Solomon Shlita** answered that Yaakov was not able to see the Roeh in the Raah -- that Hashem Roee Lo Echsar. **Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** suggested that when Yaakov talked about life, perhaps it was in comparison to the lives of Avraham and Yitzchak who, he felt, live better lives of Sheleimus, Limmud and Avodas Hashem.

Haftorah: Now son of man, take a stick and write Yehuda and friends and another and write Yosef and friends and place them together in your hands (Yechezkel 37:15-28). – Why is this an ideal Nevuah? It sounds as if putting two sticks together will create Achdus? Rav Baruch Simon Shlita once noted that Achdus is not a concept that is created by speeches. It is created when one really feels the needs of the Tzibbur as one. Nowhere is this actualized more than when the people put themselves together by working together B’Yadayim.