



Parshat Vayigash

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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“No Man” Signifies That It Was All Part of a Divine Plan

Parshas [Vayigash](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Vayigash must be one of the most dramatic *parshiyos* in the Torah. Yehudah pleads one final time “How can I go back up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest I see the evil that will befall my father!” (Bereshis 44:34). The *pasuk* then says “And Yosef could not endure in the presence of all who stood before him, so he called out, ‘Remove everyone from before me!’...” (Bereshis 45:1) Even though throughout all these *parshiyos*, Yosef has been giving the impression that he is not Yosef and he had been making his brothers really sweat, he can no longer do that. The viceroy of Mitzrayim certainly always had attendants, staff and servants in his presence. He had not been alone with his brothers. He ordered everyone other than his brothers to leave the room. Then the *pasuk* concludes: “...Thus no man stood with him when Yosef made himself known to his brothers.” (ibid.)

But this conclusion of *pasuk* 45:1 is redundant! The beginning of that *pasuk* already says that Yosef ordered everyone out of the room. Why do we need the end of the *pasuk* to restate the fact that no man stood with Yosef when he made himself known to his brothers?

I saw a beautiful answer given to this question, written in the name of Rabbi Shmuel Brazil. In order to appreciate this answer, I will give you an analogy:

About a year-and-a-half ago (on the first day of *bein hazemanim* before Pesach), I was working at my desk, and I had some errands to run. I knew I had to go, but I decided that I wanted to finish something first. I stuck around for a couple of

minutes longer. I finished what I had to do. I then drove down Mt. Wilson Lane, making a right turn onto Reisterstown Road, as I must have done thousands of times in my life. I was turning by the green light and suddenly, the next thing I knew a car flew into me. I wound up in the corner of that little shopping strip on the corner of Mt. Wilson and Reisterstown Road. I didn't know what happened. I asked myself "Did I go through a red light? What just happened to me?"

Within several minutes, I found out exactly what had happened: There was a fugitive of justice who was wanted for kidnapping and attempted murder in Washington D.C. He crossed state lines, making it a federal case. The United States Marshall Service was chasing after him. The marshals went up Reisterstown Road and this fugitive went down Reisterstown Road. He must have been going 70 or 80 miles per hour. The cops were in hot pursuit. This fugitive came to the red light on Mt. Wilson Lane and Reisterstown Road. After kidnapping and attempted murder, a red light was not about to stop him. He plowed into one car, plowed into a second car, and then plowed into my car before plowing into a truck which finally stopped him from going any further.

He got out of his car and started running towards the woods. The marshals ran after him and beat him to a pulp. In the meantime, my car was totaled. I am thinking in my mind that I should be suing the United States Government: *Frاند vs. the United States of America*. I was disabused of that notion because a person cannot sue the U.S. Government when they are after somebody. At any rate, Baruch Hashem, I walked away from the incident without a scratch, despite the fact that my car was totaled. The insurance gave me a nice settlement, *v'nomar Amen!*

But my initial thought was that had I gotten up from my desk when I had originally intended (two or three minutes earlier), this would

have never happened to me. It was only because I left my house when I did, and because I was at Reisterstown Road at that specific time, that I was involved in this multiple vehicle traffic incident. Such a thought is *kefira* (heresy). For whatever reason, the *Ribono shel Olam* wanted me to get into that accident. The reason is between me and the *Ribono shel Olam*. The way to look at what happened is not that because I waited the few extra minutes, I was involved in an accident. Rather, the proper perspective of the matter is that it was decreed in Heaven that I should be involved in that accident, and consequently, I hesitated leaving home for a few extra minutes so that I would be in that place at that time to be involved in that accident. This is the way a person must look at life. We see this many times with elderly parents. I knew a very elderly gentleman who was living with one of his daughters in New York. He decided to come down to live with his daughter in Baltimore, and not long afterwards, he died. Everyone's reaction is "If he would have stayed in New York, this would not have happened. The schlepping and the effort of the relocation were too much for him. That is why he died." No. That is not true. He died then because when he was born, it was decreed upon him exactly when he would die and where he would die.

That is the way a person needs to look at life. We should never engage in "What if?" scenarios. We believe in *Hashgocha Pratis* (Personal Divine Providence). We wind up in a certain place at a certain time because the *Ribono shel Olam* wants us there at that time.

Rav Shmuel Brazil says beautifully: "Yosef ordered all the people out of the room *"v'lo amad ish itd"* (and no man remained with him)." Who was this *"v'lo amad ish itd"*? Who was this **man**? Before answering this question, consider another *pasuk* all the way back in Parshas Vayeshev. Yaakov tells Yosef to go and check

out where his brothers are. Yosef starts wandering and he can't find his brothers. The *pasuk* says, "And a **man** found him, and behold he was blundering in the field; the **man** asked him 'What do you seek?'" (Bereshis 37:15) Rashi there says this **man** was the Angel Gavriel. The *Ribono shel Olam* put Gavriel over there in order that he should meet Yosef and direct Yosef to Dosan, where he would meet up with his brothers.

That, says Rav Brazil, is the **man** the *pasuk* is referring to here in Parshas Vayigash where it says "And there was no **man** that stood with him." Yosef did not say "You know what? If I would not have met that **man** all the way back then, I would have come home to my father and said to him, 'Guess what? I can't find my brothers.'" Yosef did not let the thought enter his head that had he not met that **man**, he would not have met his brothers, and the brothers would not have sold him as a slave, and he would not have gone down to Mitzrayim, and he would not have been in the dungeon, etc., etc., etc.

The *pasuk* says "the **man** was not standing with him" to emphasize that Yosef realized that what happened to him was not at all attributable to the chance appearance of "that **man**," but rather, it was all part of a Divine plan. The *Ribono shel Olam* wanted this entire long and difficult story to occur.

A Simple Pshat in the Wagons Rejuvenating Yaakov

I was recently sitting at the same table as Rabbi Yaakov Hopfer at a wedding. Rabbi Hopfer told me the following vort:

After Yosef revealed his true identity to his brothers, Yosef instructs them to bring their father, Yaakov, down to Mitzrayim. The brothers returned to Canaan and told Yaakov the whole story: "Yosef is still alive and he is the ruler over the entire land of Egypt; but he had a turn of heart, for he did not believe them. And they

related to him all the words of Yosef that he had spoken to them, and he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him, then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived.” (Bereshis 45:26-27)

The sight of those wagons rejuvenated Yaakov, causing him to realize that Yosef was still alive.

We spoke in the past of the Medrash quoted by Rashi that the wagons (*agalos*) were a special sign that Yosef sent to his father, reminding Yaakov that the last Torah section they had studied together before they were separated for so many years was *Eglah Arufah* (the decapitated calf). The hint was based on the similarity between the word *eglah* and the word *agala*.

However, there can also be a *p'shuto shel mikra* (simple reading of the text): When Yaakov saw the wagons that Yosef sent to transport him and his family to Mitzrayim, his spirit returned to him. Why?

This can be understood with an analogy:

There is a fine pious Jew who lives in Brooklyn. He has a son who is “more modern,” who does not exactly follow in his father’s footsteps. The son goes off to college, which does not do much for his *ruchniyus*. He is still an Orthodox Jew, but not exactly on the same spiritual level as his father. He meets a girl. The father is not so happy with whom his son married. Then the son and his wife decide to move to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The father in Brooklyn misses his son. He calls him up and says “Son, it has been so long since I have seen you. I want to come visit you in New Mexico.” The son says, “You will schlep all the way to Santa Fe?” “Yes. I want to see you.” The last thing in the world this son wants is for his father from Brooklyn to come and see how he lives in Santa Fe. The father will see so many things which will

displease him: How the house is run, how the wife dresses, how she acts. He will look in the refrigerator and see who knows what. Seeking any way to avoid his father coming to Santa Fe, the son says to the father, "Dad, it is too big a deal for you to come from Brooklyn to Santa Fe. I will come to see you!" Why does he suggest that? It is because the last thing he wants is for the father to see how he lives in his new location. (I actually was in Santa Fe and saw the Chabad of Santa Fe, but it is far from an established Jewish community.)

Yosef was in Mitzrayim. He was away for so many years. He was cut off from any type of support system. There wasn't even a Chabad of Mitzrayim! Yaakov could have thought "Who knows what could have happened to Yosef? What does he look like? What does his house look like?"

But what does Yosef do? He sends wagons to Yaakov to bring him to Mitzrayim so he can see how Yosef is living there! Yaakov felt, if Yosef is ready for me to see him and how he lives in his home territory, then I know one thing – he is still Yosef, my son. He is still Yosef *haTzadik*. Once Yaakov perceives that, his spirit is rejuvenated.

Parents Love Children More Than Children Love Parents

Parshas [Vayigash](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The Shalo"h Hakodesh writes a concept (which is also found in secular circles): One parent can take care of ten children but ten children cannot take care of one parent. The Chiddushei HaRim finds a source for this idea in this week's parsha. When Yehudah made his impassioned plea to the Viceroy in Egypt (who he did not yet realize was his brother Yosef) to release Binyamin, he made the argument — "How can you not let him go? If his father finds

out that he did not return, he will not be able to survive!" The Chiddushei HaRim points out that at that time, Binyamin had 10 children. Why did Yehudah not use the argument — how can you not let Binyamin go, you will leave 10 orphans, they will not be able to survive without their father? Apparently, says Chiddushei HaRim, 10 children can somehow manage without a father, but a father cannot manage without one of 10 remaining sons.

This concept that a father's attachment to his children is stronger than the children's attachment to their father is the source for the Shaloh's comment and for the similar concept that circulates in the world at large.

This may be an upsetting idea to all of us who are parents, but that is the truth. Our children love us and respect us, etc., but it is not the same as our love for them. I once saw a very interesting explanation for this phenomenon. Every single human emotion that exists is something we received from Adam, the first human being. Adam had children and therefore he had in him the emotion of a parent's love for his children. However, Adam did not have a father. He is the only person in the history of the world who did not have parents. Consequently, the emotion of love of child for parent was something he did not possess. It was an acquired skill developed in later generations, but it never had the strong genetically passed down roots that existed in the emotion of love towards children, which is innate in our personalities.

For this reason, Yehudah recognized that the stronger argument for the release of Binyamin would be "his father can't survive his loss" rather than "his children will not be able to survive his loss." The Shemen HaTov uses this concept to interpret a Rashi in our parsha. The last part of Pasuk 29 in Perek 46 is very ambiguous. The pasuk reads: "Yosef harnessed his chariot and went up to meet Yisrael his father to Goshen; and he appeared to

him, fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck excessively.” Who appeared to whom? Rashi says that Yosef is the subject and Yaakov is the object in this sentence. Yosef appeared to Yaakov. How does Rashi know this? Why was Rashi so sure that the interpretation is not that Yaakov appeared to Yosef?

The Shemen HaTov explains, based on the earlier stated concept, that the emotion of Yosef appearing to Yaakov was far more dramatic and powerful than the emotion of Yaakov appearing to Yosef. The love of parent to child is much deeper, much more profound, much more intense and innate than the reverse relationship. Therefore, the Torah emphasizes the more dramatic of the two relationships in this reunion: Yosef appeared to his father.

The Apparent Tangent Is Crucial To The Story

The end of the parsha contains the story of Klal Yisrael’s descent to Egypt. “Yosef settled his father and his brothers in the land of Egypt, in the prime portion of Ramses, as Pharaoh had commanded. Yosef took care of them and provided for them... Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; they took holdings in it and they were fruitful and multiplied greatly.” [Bereishis 47:11-12; 27] It is noteworthy that there is a 14 pasuk gap in the narrative of how the Children of Israel came down to Egypt and settled. We might have written the story exactly as quoted above, just without a break in the narrative.

The Torah describes the events of the first two pesukim, but then goes off on a tangent. The Torah says that the famine grew more intense. The people came to Yosef and asked them what they were going to eat. Yosef told them he would sell them food. They said that they had no money to pay for the food. Yosef told them he would take their cattle in payment. The following year they had

neither food nor cattle to pay for food. Yosef took ownership of their land and in effect bought the entire country for the government. There remained no private property in Egypt. The government bought all land holdings, lock stock and barrel. Then, to demonstrate government ownership of the land, Yosef made everyone relocate. Yosef changed the whole country around. Those who had lived in Alexandria moved to Cairo, those who lived in Cairo moved to Alexandria, etc. The only exception to this rule was the Priests of Egypt. Pharaoh did not acquire their land; it remained their own. Yosef made one final decree. He instituted an across the board 20% income tax payable by the entire population, again, except the Priests who had a tax exemption. Finally, the Torah concludes the earlier narrative and states "Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt in the Land of Goshen..."

There are several difficulties with this narrative. First, why is the Torah telling us the history of land ownership and tax system in Egypt? Why is this germane? More to the point, why is this stuck into the middle of the story of the Jews' descent to Egypt and their settling there?

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky makes a fundamental comment here. Yosef haTzadik was a man of great vision. He understood what was coming and he knew what to do about it. He knew the real fear that a small minority in a large country might eventually assimilate, acculturate, and become like the rest of the population. Yosef asked himself, "What can I do to save my family? What am I going to do in order to preserve the family traditions in Egypt?" Yosef devised a brilliant plan.

When Jews came to America in the 1920s, the 1930s, and the 1940s, they were called "greenhorns". They were refugees whose strongest desire was to become Americans. They wanted to become like everyone else. They hated being considered outsiders

from the old country who did not know what to do in the new land. Yosef's plan was to see to it that there was no such thing as a "permanent citizen" (toshav) in Egypt. Everyone will be a foreigner and greenhorn. The entire population was stripped of their land and moved to "foreign cities". No one felt at home. There were no long-standing aristocrats for the Children of Israel to want to emulate. The entire population was "the new guy on the block". Then, Yosef imposed a tax and codified in the bylaws of Egypt that clergy would be exempt from national taxes. Later on when the Egyptians decided to enslave the Jews, they appointed over them "tax collectors" (Sarei Misim) and imposed a labor tax. However, per the national precedent, they exempted the priestly tribe from taxes — the Tribe of Levi.

Yosef created a precedent that resulted in one tribe that learned all day throughout the sojourn in Egypt. There was a portion of the nation that was guaranteed to be the "keepers of the faith" (Shomer Emunim). They would therefore never become acculturated and never become assimilated.

Now we understand why the Torah mentions this here and why the tangent is not such a tangent. Before the Torah tells us the story of the Jews in Egypt, before they could really settle down, Yosef had to make sure that the assimilation that would occur to so many Jews throughout the millennia would not happen to the Jews in Egypt. Yosef attempted to do that by (a) making everyone feel not at home and (b) by inventing the concept of the priestly exemption, so that there would always be a "Shevet Levi" amongst the Jewish people to provide them with the moral compass, pointing in the direction of what the Torah wants. This is what preserved Klal Yisrael in the Exile of Egypt. Then and only then can the Torah conclude the story and tell us: "Thus Israel settled in the

land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; they took holdings in it and they were fruitful and multiplied greatly.”

one person or many people?

Written by d fine

Rashi (46:26) cites the Midrash which comments that in referring to the Bnei Yaakov, the pasuk describes them as ‘one nefesh (person),’ whilst when discussing Bnei Eisav it calls them many people (nefashos). Why? Answers Rashi that Yaakov’s descendents serve one G-D and so they are described in the singular, whilst Eisav’s kids served many gods and so are described in the plural. But why does this make sense – the Torah is talking about the people, not how many powers they served?

The answer is that there is a fundamental difference between someone who serves one G-D and someone who serves many gods. Someone who serves one G-D realizes that this G-D is supreme, and so is ready to subjugate and nullify himself & his ego before this G-D. But someone who serves many gods just wants the goods that these gods provide, and so is really only interested in his needs and his ego. Now it is only someone who nullifies his ego who can bond together in unity with other people – someone who is too interested in himself and his own wants will never form a proper team.

Thus, when the Torah describes Bnei Yaakov it calls them one person, for it is because they serve one G-D and so have nullified their egos that they can bond together (like one man with one heart; Rashi Yisro). But Bnei Eisav serve many gods and are only interested in their own needs, wants, and egos, and so cannot bond together. Thus, they are referred to in the plural.

As Rabbi Krohn said, **‘THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN UNITE AND UNTIE IS WHERE YOU PUT THE I.’!**

Life Lessons: speak from the bottom of your heart, and make yourself heard!!

Written by Benjamin A Rose

When Yehuda decides to argue with the Egyptian viceroy (who was really his brother Yosef) to not take Binyomin as a slave, the Torah states:

“And Yehuda approached Yosef and he said, ‘Please my master, allow your servant to speak in the ears of my master and do not become angry at your servant for you are like Pharaoh.’ ” (Genesis 44:18)

Yehuda was under the impression that this Egyptian leader (Yosef) did not understand Hebrew since he used an interpreter. Why then did Yehudah ask to speak in his ears?

The late Rosh Yeshiva of Brisk in yerushalyim, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveichik, explained this in two ways.

The first explanation: even though Yehudah thought Yosef did not understand the language he was speaking, he wanted him to hear the depth of feeling behind his words. Even if one does not speak the language, sincerity will come through. “Words that come from a person’s heart enter the heart of the listener.”

This happened to the Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, while speaking to a high government official in Russia to remove a harmful decree against the Jewish people. Even before the interpreter translated the Chofetz Chaim’s words from Yiddish, the listener said that no translation was necessary. He understood the language of feeling that permeated each word that came from a pure heart.

Rabbi Soloveichik’s second insight: when you try to influence someone, it is imperative that he be open to what you have to say. If a person is close-minded and has made up his mind not to pay attention to you, nothing you say will influence him. You can give all kinds of rational arguments for your position, but the person will be as if deaf. Therefore, yehudah asked Yosef to at least give him a fair hearing. “Keep your ears open to the possibility that what I will say has merit.”

These two ideas are important to keep in mind when trying to impact someone. Speak with sincerity. When you speak from the bottom of your heart, your words have tremendous force and power. Secondly, make certain that the other person is open to hearing what you have to say. For instance, you might start by saying, “If what I say makes sense, are you willing to change your mind?”

Goshen Green

Written by d fine

Strangely, when Yosef relays the message that his brothers are to tell Yaakov when they return home, Yosef makes sure that Yaakov is told ‘you will settle in the land of Goshen’ (45:10).

Why did Yaakov have to know this? The Tur and the Ramban both point out that Yaakov would only agree to come down to Egypt if he (and his family) did not live in the government city; the home of the Egyptian rulers.

This could be for one of two reasons (or both). Firstly, Yaakov did not want his sons, grandsons, etc. to be around the materialistic, self-centred ruling class Egyptians be influenced by them.

Alternatively, Yaakov did not want his children to be involved with the running of Egypt – he wanted to make sure that his children focused on learning Torah and spiritual growth instead.

Humor

A Burial Plot

An old Jewish woman, on her 80th birthday, decides to prepare her last will and testament. She goes to the rabbi to show it to him and to ask him for advice on a few points, chief amongst them is her request that she not be buried in a Jewish cemetery.

"But why Mrs. Epstein?" the rabbi asks. "You don't want to be buried with the rest of our people?"

"No," Mrs. Epstein said resolutely. "I want to be buried at Bloomingdales."

"Bloomingdales?!" the rabbi said in disbelief.

"Yes. Then I'll be sure that my daughters will visit me at least twice a week!"

Life's a Beach

Savta Esther, a notoriously tough Israeli grandmother, was at the beach one Friday with her grandchildren when someone approached her asking for Tzedakah.

"Please Geveret" (madam), he pleads with his hand out. "I haven't eaten all day."

"Good," says Savta Esther. "Now you won't have to worry about cramps when you go for a swim."

Aches and Pains

At the Beth Israel nursing home in Boca Raton Florida, a group of senior citizens were sitting around talking about their aches and pains. "My arms are so weak I can hardly lift this cup of coffee," said Applebaum.

"I know what you mean. My cataracts are so bad I can't even see my coffee," replied Shiffman.

"I can't turn my head because of the arthritis in my neck," said Markewitz, to which several nodded weakly in agreement.

"My blood pressure pills make me dizzy," Himmlefarb contributed.

"I guess that's the price we pay for getting old," winced Goldberg as he slowly shook his head. Then there was a short moment of silence.

"Well, it's not that bad," said Rosenbloom cheerfully. "Thank God we can all still drive."

Lights Out

Old Mrs. Klopman was on her annual flight down to Florida for the winter. She kept peering out the window and since it was totally dark, all she could see was the blinking wing-tip light. Finally, she rang for the flight attendant.

"I'm sorry to bother you," said Mrs. Klopman, "but I think you should inform the pilot that his left-turn indicator is on and has been for some time." She added, "Tell him I said not to worry – it happens to me all of the time."

