

In this week's *Parashah*, the Egyptian viceroy reveals that he is Yosef, and he encourages his brothers to bring their father Yaakov to Egypt to live out the years of famine there. As Yaakov is descending to Egypt, *Hashem* appears to Yaakov and says (46:3-4), "Have no fear of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up."

R' Chaim Druckman z"l (rabbi, *Rosh Yeshiva*, and *Knesset* member, who passed away this week at the age of 90) writes: *Midrash Rabbah* observes: "One says, 'Have no fear,' only to someone who is afraid." Of what was Yaakov afraid? From *Hashem's* words of reassurance, we see that Yaakov was afraid of two things, R' Druckman writes.

First, Yaakov was afraid that his descendants would be annihilated physically in exile. To dispel this fear, *Hashem* told him, "I shall establish you as a great nation there." Second, Yaakov was afraid that his descendants would assimilate and experience spiritual destruction. In response, *Hashem* assured him, "I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up."

It stands to reason, continues R' Druckman, that the spiritual concern was the primary one. We read (*Vayikra* 18:3), "Do not perform the acts of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled." *Rashi* z"l comments, "This tells us that the deeds of the Egyptians were more corrupt than those of all other nations, and that the district of Egypt in which *Bnei Yisrael* had resided was even more corrupt than the rest of Egypt." The danger that Jews will become comfortable in their exile, will assimilate into their corrupt surroundings, and will not want to be redeemed is the greatest danger of all. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach La'zman Ha'zeh* p.83)

Shabbat

R' Dov Kook *shlita* (rabbi in Teveryah, Israel; author of more 100 works on Torah, *Talmud*, *Tefilah*, and *Kabbalah*) writes: *Erev Shabbat* (Friday) is a holy time of yearning and preparation for the special day of the week--*Shabbat*, the day of pleasure for the soul.

The sweetness of *Erev Shabbat* surpasses, in one respect, that of *Shabbat* itself, for every minute, we are getting closer to *Shabbat*--the greatest source of joy. In this sense, *Erev Shabbat* is like the days of *Sefirat Ha'omer* leading to *Shavuot*. Every day of *Sefirah*, our joy increases as we come closer and closer to the Giving of the Torah. In contrast, on *Shabbat* itself, though its holiness increases and increases, nevertheless, every moment brings us closer to the end of *Shabbat*. (*Italuta* p.465)

From the same work:

It is well known that, in every Jewish house, there is tremendous pressure before *Shabbat*. This is "good pressure," and there is no escaping it, writes R' Kook. This is the reality! Even if one would make all of his *Shabbat* preparations on Thursday, it would accomplish nothing; there still would be tremendous pressure an hour before *Shabbat*.

Why?

R' Kook explains: *Shabbat*, the seventh day, alludes to the coming of *Mashiach*, ushering in the seventh millennium. When the world sees that *Mashiach* is about to arrive, the world will, of course, run to greet him.

It is true that we are constantly preparing for *Mashiach*. Nevertheless, when one sees his destination on the horizon, one runs toward it. Similarly, in the spiritual realm, when one sees *Mashiach* on the horizon, one runs toward him.

The *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 43b) says that Eliyahu Ha'navi will not come on a Friday to herald *Mashiach's* arrival. On Friday, we ourselves are busy preparing for *Shabbat*--which, by definition, prepares us for *Mashiach*--and Eliyahu does not want to disturb us. The more we approach *Shabbat* with a sense of urgency, the more we are preparing for the coming of *Mashiach*.

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“Thus Yosef acquired all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field because the famine had overwhelmed them; and the land became Pharaoh’s. As for the nation, he resettled it by cities, from one end of Egypt’s borders to the other. Only the land of the priests he did not acquire, since the priests had a stipend from Pharaoh, and they lived off their stipend that Pharaoh had given them; therefore, they did not sell their land.” (47:20-22)

Why did Yosef not force the priests, also, to sell their land to Pharaoh in exchange for the stipends they received?

The Aramaic translation and commentary *Targum Yonatan Ben Uziel* writes: “Because they saw his merit when his master wanted to kill him, and they saved him from death.”

R’ Chizkiah ben Manoach *z”l* (“*Chizkuni*”; France; 13th century) elaborates: The priests were the ones who judged Yosef when he was falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife. The priests did not accept Yosef’s guilt, so they sentenced him to prison instead of death. (They could not acquit Yosef entirely, *Chizkuni* writes, as that would have been an insult to his aristocratic accuser.)

R’ Yaakov ben Asher *z”l* (“*Ba’al Ha’turim*”; Spain; 14th century) writes: Some say it was in honor of [Yosef’s father-in-law] Potiphara, the Priest of Ohn. [In his honor, all of the priests were excused from transferring their lands to Pharaoh.]

Rashi writes that Yosef’s father-in-law, Potiphara, was the same person as Potiphar, Yosef’s former master. As such, asks R’ Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg *shlita* (*Tolna Rebbe* in Yerushalayim) asks: It is understandable that Yosef would feel gratitude to the priests who spared him from death, but why should he feel gratitude to Potiphar, who imprisoned him unjustly?

The *Tolna Rebbe* explains: Yosef Ha’tzaddik is teaching us a profound lesson about *Hakarat Ha’tov* / gratitude, *i.e.*, that I am obligated to be grateful for and repay every good deed done towards me, even if the person who did that good deed also has acted badly towards me. We read (*Devarim* 23:8), “You shall not reject an Egyptian, for you were a sojourner in his land.” *Rashi* writes: Although the Egyptians eventually threw our male babies in the Nile, we are indebted to them because they took us in in our time of need.

The *Tolna Rebbe* concludes: Our Sages say that there is no lowlier trait than to be a “*Kafuy tov*” / an ingrate. Our *Parashah* teaches that the opposite trait--being a grateful person--requires showing gratitude even in circumstances in which that is not the obvious response.

(*Chamin B’motzai Shabbat*)

“Yosef said to his brothers, ‘I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?’ But his brothers could not answer him, because they were disconcerted before him (literally, ‘because of his face’).” (45:3)

R’ Tuvia Ha’rofeh *z”l* (1652-1729; son of the rabbi of Narol, Poland; one of the first Jews to study in a German university; physician to five sultans of the Ottoman Empire; lived his final years in Yerushalayim) writes: Yosef’s brothers were disconcerted because of Yosef’s face--literally. He explains: *Rashi z”l* (to *Bereishit* 37:3) writes that Yosef resembled Yaakov. Yosef’s brothers suddenly saw the physical resemblance between the Egyptian viceroy and their father, and they realized that they were, indeed, standing in their brother’s presence.

(*Birkat Tov*)

If Yosef looked like Yaakov, why did his brothers not recognize him sooner? Indeed, they did not recognize him despite the many hints he gave--for example, seating them at the dinner table in age order and grouped by shared mothers. The Torah relates (43:33), “The men looked at one another in astonishment,” yet they did not put two and two together and recognize their brother!

R’ Isaac Sher *z”l* (1875-1952; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Slabodka Yeshiva in Lithuania and, after the Holocaust, in Bnei Brak, Israel) explains: *Midrash Rabbah* relates that before Yosef’s brothers went to buy food, they spent three days searching for their brother in Egypt’s “red light district.” They reasoned that, given Yosef’s beauty, he surely had been sold for immoral purposes. So deeply rooted was this assumption, that they were incapable of seeing the truth that was staring them in the face.

R’ Sher continues: If these great men could err so, how much more so must we be aware that we regularly are blinded by assumptions and viewpoints that have taken hold in our minds.

(*Lekket Sichot Mussar* I p.127)



“Hurry, go up to my father and say to him, ‘So said your son Yosef, “Elokim has made me master of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not delay”.’” (45:9)

“Now these are the names of the children of Yisrael who were coming to Egypt . . .” (46:8)

R’ Chaim Friedlander *z”l* (1923-1986; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) notes: In last week’s *Parashah* and the beginning of this week’s *Parashah*, traveling from *Eretz Yisrael* to Egypt is referred to as coming “down” (using the root ירד). Later in this week’s *Parashah*, and also in *Parashat Shmot*, the same journey is referring to as “coming” (using the root בא).

R’ Friedlander explains: At first, Yaakov’s sons could sense a spiritual descent--a “going down”--when they entered and spent time amidst the impurity of Egypt. But, once they decided to settle there, even temporarily, they lost that sensitivity. Thereafter, they no longer are described as coming “down.”

(*Siftei Chaim: Mo’adim* II p.384)