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 הרבנית הצדקנית
 מרת חנה ע"ה ז"ל
 שניאורסאהן
 אם כ"ק אדמו"ר זי"ע
 בקשר עם יום הבהיר כ"ח טבת

נדפס ע"י הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל
 וזוגתו מרת רבקה שיחיו מינקאוויץ
 בנם ובנותיהם
 מאיר שלמה, חיה מושקא,
 זעלדא רחל, וחנה שליט"א

Life After Yaakov

IN HONOR OF 60 YEARS SINCE THE REBBE INTRODUCING HIS REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING RASHI, 5725–5785, THIS MONTHLY COLUMN FEATURES AN ADAPTATION OF ONE OF THE REBBE'S "RASHI SICHOS."

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וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעַת
 עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וְגו' (כו, כח)

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב: לְמַה פָּרְשָׁה זוֹ סְתוּמָה? לְפִי שְׂבִיבוֹן
 שְׂנֵפֶטֶר יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוֹ נִסְתָּמוּ עֵינֵיהֶם וְלִבָּם שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל
 מִצְרַת הַשְּׁעָבוֹד, שֶׁהִתְחִילוּ לְשַׁעֲבָדָם... (רש"י)

And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years.

“And Yaakov lived: *Why is this parshah closed up (i.e., doesn’t start at the beginning of a paragraph)? Because, when Yaakov Avinu passed away, the eyes and hearts of [B’nei] Yisroel were ‘closed’ due to the misery of bondage, for they (the Egyptians) commenced to enslave them...*” (Rashi)

Rashi’s commentary raises some questions:

1. In Parshas Va’era (6:16), Rashi writes that “as long as one of the shevatim was alive, there was no bondage”—contrary to what is implied by Rashi’s words here, that the suffering of slavery began “when Yaakov Avinu passed away,” even while the *shevatim* were living?

2. How could the *Yidden’s* enslavement have begun during Yosef’s lifetime? Yosef ruled the land of Egypt, and without him, “No one may lift his hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt”?!

3. What is Rashi’s intention with the words “the eyes and the hearts of [B’nei] Yisroel were ‘closed’”? We can understand that slavery affects the (emotions of the) heart, but what does it have to do with one’s eyes?

In truth, the questions answer each other: Rashi is not saying that the *actual* enslavement began with the passing of Yaakov, only that it *appeared* to the *Yidden* that the first stage of enslavement had begun—hence the reference to their *eyes* (which—as per the dictum “the heart follows the eyes”—led them to *feel* that way as well).

But what made it appear so?

We see that Yaakov’s passing caused a certain distancing between Yosef and his brothers—as evidenced in a *possuk*—later on in the *parsha*:

וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת־יְוֹסֵף כִּי־מֵת אָבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יִשְׁטַמְנוּ יוֹסֵף וְגו'... (נ, טו)
 “מהו וַיֵּרְאוּ? הֲכִירוּ בְּמִיתוֹתוֹ אֶצְל יוֹסֵף, שֶׁהָיוּ רְגִילִים לְסַעֵד עַל שְׁלֶחְנוֹ שֶׁל יוֹסֵף וְהָיָה מְקַרְבָּן בְּשִׁבְלֵי כְבוֹד אֲבִיו, וּמִשְׁמַת יַעֲקֹב לֹא קָרְבָן” (רש"י)
 “Now Yosef’s brothers saw that their father had died, and they said, “Perhaps Yosef will hate us...”



“What does it mean that ‘they saw’? They recognized his (Yaakov’s) death in Yosef, for they were accustomed to dine at Yosef’s table, and he was friendly toward them out of respect for his father, but as soon as Yaakov died, he was no longer friendly toward them.” (Rashi)

If this was true about Yosef, then how much more so with regard to the inhabitants of Egypt: They had honored and respected Yaakov because of the tremendous *bracha* he brought to Egypt with his arrival (the famine ended, and the waters of the Nile rose). As a result, they treated his family with honor and respect as well. This changed after Yaakov’s passing; they didn’t treat the *Yidden* with the same degree of respect as before.

The *Yidden* interpreted this change in attitude as an effort to gain control over them.

But wouldn’t Yosef protect them? Well, since Yosef had clearly distanced himself from his family, they feared that he wouldn’t visit them in Goshen anymore, inquire as to how they were faring and see what he could do to help them. They wouldn’t be able to rely on Yosef to save them, and they would be defenseless against their hostile neighbors.

Watching all this unfold before their eyes led the *Yidden* to feel “the misery of bondage, for they (the Egyptians) commenced to enslave them.”



The *avoda* of Yosef and of the *shevatim* were very different. The *shevatim* remained secluded from the world. Like their forefathers, they were shepherds, and able to spend their days removed from the hustle and bustle of city life, connecting to Hashem with no distractions.

Yosef was the opposite extreme. He was fully involved in

worldly affairs, first as manager of Potifar’s household, and, ultimately, as ruler of Egypt. Yet even in the midst of all of this, Yosef remained completely connected and one with Hashem.

In *galus Mitzrayim*, the *Yidden* could no longer afford to stay secluded from the world, since the whole purpose of going into *galus* is to refine the world. There needed to be a fusion of both types of *avoda*.

This fusion existed as long as Yaakov was alive: During Yaakov’s lifetime, the Torah that the *Yidden* learnt was able to influence the mundane aspects of their lives as well. Even in *Mitzrayim*, they were able to have “*וירחי יעקב*”—life in its truest form, guided by the Torah.

After Yaakov passed away, however, this fusion disappeared—Yosef and his brothers drifted apart.

Takeaway:

The way to ensure that these last moments of *galus* are lived in the best way *b’gashmiyus* and *b’ruchniyus*—“*וירחי יעקב*”—is by continuously increasing in one’s Torah learning, and learning in a way that it influences the mundane aspects of one’s life as well. One should increase set times in the day for learning *nigleh* and *Chassidus*—and especially *halacha*—as well as to increase in teaching others (including teaching non-Jews, *l’havdil*, about the *mitzvos* which pertain to them).

(*Sefer Hasichos* 5749 vol. 1, p. 170)