

Our *Parashah* opens with Yehuda speaking up on behalf of his brother Binyamin, who stands falsely accused of stealing Yosef's goblet. Among other things, Yehuda says (44:32), "For your servant took responsibility for the youth from my father saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I will be sinning to my father for all time'."

R' Yehoshua ibn Shuiv z"l (Spain; early 14th century) introduces his commentary on this week's *Parashah* with the verses from *Mishlei* (6:1-3), "My child, if you have been a guarantor for your friend, if you have given your handshake for a stranger, you have been trapped by the words of your mouth ... Do this, therefore, my child, and be rescued." He writes: King Shlomo composed *Mishlei* on multiple levels. There is a revealed interpretation, which gives advice on caring for one's physical well-being. There also is a deeper interpretation, which addresses the well-being of the soul. Only when a person is whole in body and soul is he complete. There are some verses, he continues, which can be understood literally, some that can be understood only as parables or metaphors, and some that can be understood both ways. Our verses, for example, can refer to unwisely guaranteeing another person's safety, but they also can refer to giving a handshake to--i.e., making a deal with--the *Yetzer Ha'ra*.

Yehuda, too, speaks on multiple levels simultaneously at the beginning of our *Parashah*. On the one hand, his words to Yosef can be understood as a plea for mercy. On the other hand, our Sages note (see *Rashi z"l* to 44:18-19), his words contained rebuke and veiled threats. (*Derashot R"Y ibn Shuiv*)

Shabbat

Midrash Rabbah teaches: To what may the world's situation at the end of Creation be compared? To a king who made a ring. What was it missing? A signet! Similarly, what was the world missing? *Shabbat*! [Until here from the *Midrash*]

The commentary on *Midrash Rabbah* attributed in the standard print to *Rashi z"l*, but whose true authorship is unknown, explains: What was the world missing? *Shabbat*--i.e., a day to praise *Hashem*. Similarly it is stated in *Sefer Yetzirah* that when *Hashem* created the world, He appointed angels over each creation--the stars, the grasses, the trees, the oceans, etc. When the *Shabbat* day arrived, those appointees gathered together to praise *Hashem*, and they said (*Tehilim* 92:1), "*Mizmor shir l'yom ha'Shabbat*" / "A psalm, a song for the *Shabbat* day." [Until here from "*Rashi*."]

R' Eliyahu E. Dessler *shlita* (*Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak; not to be confused with his cousin and namesake, the *Michtav M'Eliyahu*) writes: We learn from here that Adam was not the first to recite *Mizmor Shir l'yom ha'Shabbat*. (A *Midrash* records that Adam recited this psalm when he learned about the possibility of *Teshuvah*.) Rather, the Heavenly angels gathered together on *Shabbat* and sang praises to *Hashem*. That is the pinnacle and purpose of all of Creation--that through Creation, people will give thanks and praise to the King of the world, as we say in our *Shabbat* prayers (before *Yishtabach*): "For such is the duty of all creatures ... to thank, laud, praise ..."

R' Dessler continues: What is the *Midrash* teaching by comparing the world with *Shabbat* to a ring with a signet? A ring without a signet is also a complete ring, but it cannot be used to seal official documents. Similarly, Creation was fully functional before there was *Shabbat*. What was missing? A tool to publicize the greatness of *Hashem* and His Kingdom--a day when we can better understand His Greatness and His Dominion.

(*Sha'arei Ha'zemanim: Shabbat Kodesh* II p.8)

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“He sent off his brothers, and they went. He said to them, ‘Do not become agitated on the way.’” (45:24)

Rashi z”l offers several explanations for the words, “Do not become agitated on the way,” among them: “Do not take very long steps.”

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 113b) teaches: Taking a long step impairs one five-hundredth of a person’s eyesight, but his lost eyesight returns to him when he recites *Kiddush* on Friday night. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Avraham Mordechai Alter *shlita* (Yerushalayim) writes: *Slonimer Chassidim* explain that the *Gemara* is referring to taking haughty, self-assured steps, the way a person walks when he believes that his success depends entirely on his own initiative and is within his control. The more he hurries, the more he will succeed--or so he believes. Such a belief is contrary to reality, which is that we are required to do our *Hishtadlut* / make efforts, but our success is entirely in *Hashem*’s hands. When the *Gemara* says that taking long steps impairs a person’s eyesight, it means that doing so is associated with having an improper perspective. Reciting *Kiddush*, which acknowledges *Hashem*’s dominion over the entire world, restores a proper perspective.

R’ Alter adds: In this light, we can understand why it is proper to run to perform a *Mitzvah*, *i.e.*, because in that case we know that our will and our goals are the same as *Hashem*’s.

(*Divrei Emet: Emtza Makom La’Hashem* p.36)

“Yosef harnessed his chariot and went up to meet Yisrael his father in Goshen. He appeared before him, fell on his neck, and he wept on his neck excessively.” (46:29)

Rashi z”l writes: Yaakov, however, did not fall upon Yosef’s neck, nor did he kiss him. Our Rabbis say that the reason is that Yaakov was reciting *Shema*. [Until here from *Rashi*]

Many ask: Why was Yaakov reciting *Shema* at that moment? And, if it was then the time to perform that *Mitzvah*, why did Yosef not do so as well?

R’ Yaakov Moshe Charlap z”l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim’s Sha’arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) explains: From the moment Yaakov arrived in Egypt, he sensed that the ultimate purpose of his family’s exile was the revelation of *Yichud Hashem*--roughly translated: G-d’s Oneness and Uniqueness--that would occur at the time of the Exodus. Therefore, Yaakov recited *Shema*, which expresses that *Yichud*.

Yosef, however, did not recite *Shema* at that moment, because he did not sense what Yaakov was sensing. Indeed, Yosef’s role was to lead the Jewish People in exile; had he realized the benefits of the exile, it would not have felt like exile, and he would have been unable to fulfill his mission.

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom* p.114)

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

Why did Yosef ask if his father was still alive? Had the brothers not already told Yosef that their father was alive and that he was awaiting their return with Binyamin?

R’ Shimshon Chaim Nachmani z”l (Italy; 1706-1779) writes: Some commentaries say that Yosef was rebuking his brothers: “You are hypocrites! Since when do you care about my father’s feelings?” R’ Nachmani rejects that explanation, however, because other verses indicate just the opposite, *i.e.*, that Yosef tried to calm his brothers’ fears. Rather, R’ Nachmani explains: Yosef thought that his brothers would not recognize him when he identified himself, just as they had not recognized him until now. Therefore he asked, “Is my father still alive?”--*i.e.*, do you not see the resemblance between me and our father?

In this light, R’ Nachmani adds, we can better understand a teaching in *Midrash Rabbah*: Woe to us on the Day of Judgment! Woe to us on the Day of Rebuke! Yosef was [among] the youngest of the tribes, yet his brothers could not answer him because they were left in shock before him. When *Hashem* comes and rebukes each person for his actions, how much more so [will a person be unable to answer]! [Until here from the *Midrash*] What is this *Midrash* teaching? R’ Nachmani asks. Is it not obvious that a person will have no excuses when *Hashem* rebukes him?

He answers: The *Midrash* is teaching that just as Yosef’s brothers should have recognized him because he looked exactly like their father, so when *Hashem* rebukes us for our sins on the Day of Judgment, we will be ashamed when we realize that we should have recognized all along that they were sins.

(*Zera Shimshon*)



“They told him, saying, ‘Yosef is still alive’; also that he is ruler over all the land of Egypt, but his heart rejected it, for he could not believe them.” (45:26)

R’ Shlomo Elyashiv z”l (1841-1926; leading early 20th century kabbalist; grandfather of R’ Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z”l) writes: They told Yaakov that Yosef is “still alive,” *i.e.*, that he had retained his spiritual standing. Moreover, “He is ruler over all the land of Egypt,” meaning that he had subdued the forces of impurity that reigned in Egypt.

R’ Elyashiv continues: Yaakov found all of this hard to believe because Egypt’s spiritual impurity was so intense.

(*Niglot Leshem Shvo V’achlamah*)