



From the desk of
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OHR

Parashat Vayeishev

HAMELECH

More is Concealed in Life Than Revealed

Questions:

1 – Expounding upon the opening *pasuk* in our *parasha*, “And Yaakov dwelled in the land that his fathers lived...,” our Sages teach that Yaakov wished to live a life of serenity; therefore the terrible episode of Yosef’s sale occurred. What lesson do our Sages wish to teach us? 2 – We additionally must ask why this is indeed so - why are there *tzaddikim* who fulfill the Torah and mitzvot, but, nevertheless, do not merit a life of serenity in this world? On the other hand, there are wicked individuals who are successful and enjoy a life of worldly pleasure – why is this so? 3 – This question has already been posed by the prophets. It states in *Sefer Yirmiya* (12:1), “You are righteous Hashem ... Why does the way of the wicked prosper?” Similarly in *Sefer Iyov* (21:7-13) it states, “Why do the wicked live, become mighty and also amass wealth? ... Their offspring are well-established before them, and their descendants are before their eyes; Their homes are peaceful and free of fear, and the rod of Hashem is not upon them; His bull becomes pregnant without fail, his cow gives birth and does not miscarry; They send out their youth like sheep, and their children dance; They raise their voices like a drum and a harp, they rejoice at the sound of a flute; They spend their days in good fortune and in a moment they descend to the grave.” 4 – We must also understand why the *parasha* relates the story of Yosef’s sale only to interrupt it with the episode of Yehudah and Tamar. Only once concluding that story, does it return to the story of Yosef. Why does the Torah do this?

The Question of Questions – Why Do the Righteous Suffer?

We will begin by repeating the principle that we stated in last week’s *parasha* – the events that occur to the Forefathers is a sign for their children. In truth, this is the question of all questions. Besides for the prophets, every person questions why the *tzaddik* suffers. How can the reality be so? The Torah world and those who study Torah generally live very difficult lives, suffering both physically and financially. Yet those who do not observe Torah and mitzvot seem to live lives where the opposite is true – they enjoy wealth and are seemingly happy as well. They do not suffer from the persecution and hardship that observant Jews deal with. How can this be? Our Torah is the Torah of truth and Torah of the Living G-d. We must therefore contemplate and understand the Providence of Hashem, since every individual wonders how this reality can be explained. It is a matter that even causes breakdowns to many who have performed *teshuvah* and have stumbled upon many obstacles along their path. This also prevents many individuals from doing *teshuvah* since they do not see the life of Torah and mitzvot as one of fulfillment due to the suffering that they endure. They wonder what joy there is in a life of Torah observance. Yet in our *parasha* we learn that Yaakov wished to live in serenity and was met with the tragedy of Yosef. This hints to ensuing generations that this world is not one of tranquility, for as stated, the events of the Forefathers is a sign for the children. Even though I know that I am presenting the greatest and most difficult question, one which is very difficult to deal with, and perhaps it is better not to speak



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about it. Nevertheless, I will place my trust in Hashem that I will be able to explain the matter adequately, until every individual will admit to its truth.

Against Your Will You Were Born, and Against Your Will You Will Die

The key to understanding life and Hashem's interaction with mankind requires us to contemplate the fact that following the sin of Adam Harishon, death was decreed on mankind, barring select individuals. Hashem decided to limit man's lifespan to 120 years, since he possesses an evil inclination which constantly tempts him to sin and divert him from his purpose of creation. Everyone understands that man's days are limited, but he does not know how long he will live; some live longer lives and some shorter, as we see.

Why Was Man Created?

Once we understand that man's demise is inevitable, we must ask for what purpose he was created. For it was not man's decision to be born, and there is not an individual in this world who was asked if he wished to be born. This is as the Tanna teaches in *Avot* (4:22), "For against your will you were formed, against your will you were born, and against your will you are alive. Against your will you will die, and against your will you will give an accounting in the future before the King of All Kings, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*." Therefore when each individual divides up the years of his life, from the time of his birth, to when he grows up, up until his old-age, he will see that most of his days are not under his control, and they are filled with suffering. From the day he is born he must be taken care of physically, in every way. This holds true for all of

his early years. His needs change and he needs assistance until he matures and becomes independent. Only then can he live successfully in the world by finding a spouse, building a home, earning a living, and deciding how he will spend his time. At this stage of life there are varying levels in society: There are those who merit wealth and success, and then there are those who live lives of poverty, struggling, and suffering. However, once again, if they merit, they meet up at the golden age, when they once again need to be assisted by others and require the kindness of others. With each person, this is expressed in a different way. Then he finishes his stay in this world and leaves his family, friends, his property, and whatever status he attained. **Since this is the reality, we are required to ask ourselves what is the purpose of this glowing period that man experiences in this world, ultimately to be left with nothing.** This is as the holy Tanna teaches in *Masechet Avot* (3:1), "Akavia ben Mehallal says: Look at three things and you will not come to sin. Know from where you came, to where you are going, and before Who you will be giving an accounting."

The Answer to the Riddle of Man's Life

The only answer and conclusion that every intelligent individual will arrive at once we have established the previous two principles, is that there is indeed a different purpose for each man – the soul. The soul is a portion from Hashem above, and it continues to exist after man has passed away. Therefore every Jew, even one who has thrown off the yoke of Torah and mitzvot, when the date of his parents' passing and relatives arrives, he understands that he must say *kaddish* and make a *hazkara* [memorial]. For the soul lives on. Therefore it must be that that the



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life into which man was born against his will and left against his will is not the ultimate purpose in and of itself. Rather, it is to be utilized for the sake of the soul, by observing Torah and performing good deeds. Without this, man's life will be an unresolved riddle.

Hashem's Answer to Moshe Rabbeinu and David HaMelech

Now that we understand that the purpose of man's limited life in this world is for the sake of his soul, we can understand why Yaakov requested to be able to live in tranquility and why the misfortune of Yosef befell him. For this question was already asked by Moshe Rabbeinu and the answer he received was that what Hashem is able to see from Heaven, man is unable to see from where he is situated. This is as is stated in *Masechet Berachot (7a)*, that Moshe asked Hashem why there is a *tzaddik* who enjoys good fortune and another who endures misfortune. He also asked why there are wicked who prosper and wicked who suffer. Hashem answered him that a *tzaddik* who prospers is the *tzaddik* who is a son of a *tzaddik*. However, a *tzaddik* who suffers is the son of a wicked man. A wicked man who prospers is the son of a *tzaddik*, while the wicked man who suffers is the son of a wicked man. The Gemara asks why a *tzaddik* should suffer on account of the fact that his father is a wicked man, does the Torah not state, "And sons will not die because of the fathers?" The Gemara explains that the sons are only punished for the evil of their fathers if they follow in their ways. Therefore, a *tzaddik* should not be penalized for his father's wrongdoings. Rather, the Gemara answers that a *tzaddik* who prospers is a complete *tzaddik*, as opposed to one who suffers who, while being a *tzaddik*, is not a

complete *tzaddik*. A wicked man who prospers is not entirely wicked, while one who suffers is. Obviously, Hashem's response to Moshe still requires clarification. Also see *Tehillim (92:6-8)* where David HaMelech asks and answers this question as well, "How great are Your actions Hashem, very profound are Your thoughts; A boor does not know and a fool does not understand this; When the wicked bloom like grass, and all the doers of evil blossom." Also see 94:3-14, "Until when will the wicked be Hashem, until when will the wicked rejoice? ... Praiseworthy is the man whom Hashem afflicts and whom You teach from Your Torah; To give him rest from the days of evil, until a pit is dug for the wicked; For Hashem will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His heritage." David's answer as well, also requires clarification according to our capabilities.

What We See From Here is Not What is Seen From There

However, after our introduction, where we stated that the entire purpose of man's birth and ultimate demise is only for the soul, we can understand Hashem's answer to Moshe Rabbeinu. Indeed, man sees only half of the picture, but not the full picture. There is a complete *tzaddik*, and then there is a *tzaddik* who, according to the root of his soul, may not have completed his job in the world and must take further steps to fulfill his purpose. However, from this world man cannot see what is seen in Heaven. Therefore there are opposite outcomes in this world from what man might expect. So too, was David HaMelech explaining: there is no doubt that Hashem has deep and profound calculations for each soul, and there are no



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mistakes. In other words, the answer was that it may appear that the wicked man is successful and does whatever he chooses. On the other hand, it may appear that the exact opposite is true with the tzaddik. Therefore David stated that Hashem's calculations are very deep, and He will eventually repay the wicked for their wickedness. They will receive their reward **here** for any good they may have done in this world. As a result, they will be left with nothing for the World to Come, where the true, eternal reward awaits the worthy. It is a reward about which our Sages state, "Good is one hour of *korat ruach* in the World to Come, from all of life in this world." The commentators explain that *korat ruach* refers to a small measure of pleasure that is performed by a simple wave of the hand. This type of fleeting pleasure in the World to Come is greater than all of life in this world. This means that if one was to combine all of the worldly pleasures that all the creations experienced from the time of creation until now – they would not compare to a one fleeting pleasure in the World to Come. Hashem gives the wicked man his reward and enjoyment in this world, so that he should have nothing in the World to Come. He thinks that he is successful and that he is following the correct path. To the tzaddik it appears the opposite. But he must know that the opposite is true, and Hashem's thoughts are very profound when He chooses to bring suffering to a tzaddik. When an individual sees that he is not succeeding like his wicked neighbor, he should know that Hashem loves him and this is why He is afflicting him. This is as Shlomo HaMelech said, "The one who Hashem loves He afflicts." About the one who asks this question, David exclaims that such a person is called a boor who does not know and

does not understand. Or this is all to obliterate them in the future, so that they will have no share in the World to Come.

Words of the Midrash on Hashem's Providence and the Lesson of Our Parasha

With this we explained our Sages lesson that they derived from this week's *parasha*. Yaakov wished to sit in serenity, and the misfortune of Yosef befell him. This, however, is only according to **our** perspective. However, it is not Hashem's perspective. Additionally, our *parasha* teaches us about everything that transpired with Yosef and his brother's, whether it be the sale of Yosef or the story of Yehudah and his daughter in law. This is as is stated in the Midrash Rabbah (*Vayeishev* 85:1): "Rebbi Shmuel bar Nachman opened (*Yirmiah* 29), 'For I know the thoughts.' The tribes were involved in selling Yosef. Yosef was involved with his sack cloth and fasting. Reuven was involved with his sack cloth and fasting. Yaakov was involved with his sack cloth and fasting. Yehudah was involved in marrying a wife. And *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* was involved in creating the light of Mashiach." The intention of the Midrash is to teach us that while there are winds blowing in the world and various events occurring in the land which individuals are involved and busy with, however, Hashem has other hidden plans, and all is for the best. This is why the Torah interrupted the story of Yosef's sale, with the story of Yehudah. Yaakov and Yosef were suffering for some unbeknownst reason, and Hashem was arranging for Yehudah to father the Mashiach.

Scene II

An obscure Medrash tells of Moshe Rabbeinu viewing a disturbing scene. He saw Mr. A stoop



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down to drink water from a river and his wallet fell down. Mr. A went along on his way. Meanwhile, Mr. B came along, found the wallet and walked away. Then, along came Mr. C. He, too, stooped to drink. Mr. A returned, looked around for his wallet, and saw Mr. C. Jumping to conclusions, he accused, "Give me back my wallet!"

Mr. C said, "What wallet?"

Mr. A needed no more. He took out his sword and finished him off.

Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem, "What in the world is going on?!"

Hashem answered, "I'll give you some background information. Mr. A had stolen that wallet from Mr. B, and Mr. C had killed Mr. A's father. You saw Scene II without having seen Scene I, so you thought that you were witnessing injustice. In truth, it is just the opposite. Only now, each is getting exactly what he deserves."

Missed Out?!

Rav Dovid Greenfeld delivers a Daf Yomi Shiur regularly. The wife of one of his participants called him with a perplexing question. Her son's class was going to a Shabbaton in Kibbutz Lavi, but her son could not participate, due to illness. The son and the mother were both greatly disturbed. This was the class annual trip, once in a lifetime. He was a very serious boy, who learned diligently. Why should he have to miss out?

Rav Greenfeld tried to talk to the boy about how we don't always understand, but one thing we know for sure: Hashem knows best. Sometimes we find out soon, sometimes later and sometimes never.

This boy found out all too soon, when the minibus which took his classmates to the vacation

resort got into a terrible accident shortly before Shabbat. No one survived. Except for that boy who had to stay home due to illness, Baruch Hashem.

Allusion to Chanukah

This theme is represented by Chanukah, which showcases the story of the *Maccabeim* who were victorious in war. They were so called after Yehudah *Hamaccabi*. Our Sages teach us that the *roshei teivot* of the words 'מכבי' is *מי כמוך באלים* ה'. This teaches us that everything occurs because of Divine Intervention and that we must thank and praise Hashem for all of the kindness that he performs for man. Despite all of the *hester panim* and questions that man grapples with, he must strengthen himself in faith and Divine service.

Words of Mussar

You have seen that the entire *parasha* teaches us one message: more is concealed in this world than revealed, and the ways of Hashem are hidden from us. Praiseworthy is he who believes that the purpose of man's life in this world is his soul, and he happily accepts the Divine Providence in all aspects of his life. For everything is for the best, even when it seems to be the opposite. Praiseworthy is he who utilizes his limited years of life in this world to observe Torah, mitzvot, and perform good deeds. Otherwise, man cannot understand what his purpose in being born is, nor what he will walk away with at the end of his journey. This is because he is not given the choice whether or not to be born or to leave the world. Rather, his free-choice is limited to the years that he lives on this world. The wise man will look ahead, think about the future, and thereby merit both this world and the next.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka