



# Parshas Vayigash

For the week ending 5 Teves 5758  
2 & 3 January 1998

## Overview

**W**ith the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of selflessness, Yosef has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and he now reveals that he is none other than their brother Yosef. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of Hashem's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. Hashem communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that Hashem will establish the Children of Yisrael as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring, and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Yaakov/Yisrael become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

## Insights

LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE

**“Yosef gathered all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt...and...brought the money into Pharaoh's palace.” (47:14)**

Commerce is usually a matter of sophisticated back-scratching. You know. You scratch my back, and I'll buy your F-16s at an inflated price.

“What's in it for Number One?” is the subtitle on the business cards of the world.

It's like a breath of fresh air when you find someone who wants to complete the job for no other reason than that he made a commitment to do so. A person who puts his integrity above his bank account.

The prototype for this kind of person is to be found in this week's Parsha.

Yosef's rise to pre-eminence in Egypt was in order to fulfill his prophecy that his father and brothers would bow to him. And to make good Hashem's promise to Avraham that his descendants would be slaves in Egypt and emerge from there with great wealth. Yosef's ascendancy to power was no more than a preparation to fulfill these ends.

Thus, after his father and brothers were safely ensconced in Goshen, logically Yosef should have stopped working with the enormous vigor that characterized him.

This was not the case whatsoever. Even after there was no need for Yosef to carry on serving Pharaoh, Yosef launched into an agrarian plan which consolidated all the wealth of Egypt under the dominion of Pharaoh. Yosef continued to act as a prince to the manner born.

Why?

Yosef was the ultimate man of integrity. Even after his own interests had been served and there was no further need to enrich Pharaoh, Yosef returned the trust that Pharaoh had placed in him and secured the financial underpinnings of Pharaoh's dynasty.

In doing this, he sanctified Hashem's Name in the eyes of the people. For it was clear to all that Hashem grants success to those who fear Him.

Yosef was looking after “Number One.”

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WITH ALL MY HEART

**“He (Yosef) fell on his (father’s) neck and wept exceedingly.” (45:14)**

Imagine you haven’t seen your father for twenty-two years. When you finally see him again, naturally you break down in a flood of tears.

Now imagine you are the father, and not only have you not seen your son for twenty-two years, but for most of that time you thought he was dead. Wouldn’t you cry even more than your son?

When Yosef finally was reunited with his father Yaakov in this week’s Parsha, he poured out his heart in a sea of tears at the emotional release of seeing his father after so many years. Interestingly, the reaction of his father Yaakov is not mentioned at all.

Our Sages tells us that in fact, at that very moment, Yaakov was reciting the *Shema*.

Why did Yaakov choose just this, of all times, to say *Shema*?

A *tzadik* harnesses every opportunity and emotion to serve Hashem. When Yaakov felt the supreme surge of joy and love at the sight of his beloved son, his first thought was to channel his own personal joy, to direct his emotions into a sublime expression of his love for his Creator. And so he recited the *Shema*.

“And you shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart...”

## Haftorah: Yechezkel 37 15-28

*TWO CHIPS OFF THE OLD BLOCK*

One of the ways that a prophecy becomes irreversible is if it is reinforced by a symbolic action.

In this week’s Haftorah, the prophet Yechezkel foretells that, in the time of the final redemption, the two halves of the Jewish People, symbolized by Yehuda and Yosef, will be brought together like two blocks of wood. Hashem tells Yechezkel *“Join them together [so that they] look like one. They shall be one in your hands.”* (37:17)

Even though nothing could be more separate than two blocks of wood, eventually these two blocks will become one. And even though only Hashem can perform the miracle of making one block out of two, but for us to deserve the acceleration of the redemption, we must “look like one.” We must be united and free from malice.

Although the redemption is inevitable, it is in our hands to delay it or to make it happen today.

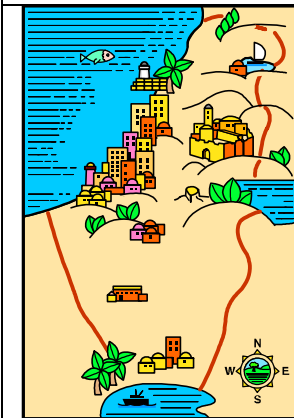
*(Based on The Midrash Says)*

Sources:

*Looking Out for Number One* - Ramban, Rabbi Meir Schlessinger, Rabbi Moshe Zauderer  
*Pieces Of Eight* - Rashi, HaRokeach al HaTorah, Maharal, Rabbi C. Z. Senter  
*With All My Heart* - Maharal

## LOVE OF THE LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael*



### FOUR CUBITS TO ETERNITY

“Whoever walks a distance of four cubits in *Eretz Yisrael* is assured of being a member of the World to Come.”

This statement cited in the name of Rabbi Yochanan is based on the passage (*Yishayahu 42:5*) in which Hashem is described as forming *Eretz (Yisrael)* and “giving life to those who walk in it.”

Our Sages saw such a powerful link between *Eretz Yisrael* and the World to Come that one of them even declared that resurrection of the dead will take place only in *Eretz Yisrael*, and the remains of those buried elsewhere will have to roll to *Eretz Yisrael* through tunnels created for them.

*Kesuvos 111a*

### Parshas Vayigash

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