

PARSHAS VAYIGASH



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YOSEF HATZADIK'S MESSAGE ABOUT OCTOBER 7TH

YOSEF DIDN'T INTEND TO COMFORT HIS BROTHERS

In this week's parsha, we encounter Yosef Hatzadik comforting his brothers after his brothers are confounded and shocked to discover that their long-lost brother, whom they sold, is none other than the viceroy of Mitzrayim. All along, it was Yosef who had been challenging them throughout this last period in their lives. And Yosef says to them, "And now, don't be sad. Don't be depressed" (Bereishis 45:5). We can all relate to such feelings. Imagine if we somehow harmed somebody, and then it turned out to your shock that the person became your savior in your life, you'd feel pretty bad that you ever caused that person any harm, especially if you sold him as a slave.

So, Yosef tells them, ועתה אל תעצבו ואל יחר בעיניכם כי מרתם אותי הנה, "Don't feel distressed, don't feel bad that you sold me." Why? כי למחיה שלחני אלקים לפניכם, "Because Hashem sent me ahead of you to Mitzrayim to be a life support. I needed to be in Mitzrayim." Yosef continues: ועתה לא אתם שלחתם אותי הנה כי האלקים וישמיני לאב לפרעה... ומושל בכל ארץ מצרים: "And now, you're not the ones who sent me here, it is Hashem; He made me a ruler over the entire Mitzrayim." (v. 8).

Now, the way we normally relate to these *pesukim* is in a very understanding manner. Because the nature of people is that when they read something in the Torah, their first thought is, "Can I relate to this? Sometimes you say, "Oh no, I can't relate to that." Sometimes you say, "Yeah, I can relate to that." Here, it sounds like something we can relate to. It seems like Yosef Hatzadik is comforting them, trying to put them at ease, like a compassionate brother. He reassures them, "Don't feel so bad for what you did. It wasn't so bad in the end. Look, I gained from this whole thing - now we have food to eat. Look what I ended up becoming. I'm a ruler in Mitzrayim. In the end, it all worked out well."

Comes along R' Yerucham Levovitz (1875-1936) and says: That's not Torah thinking! And certainly Yosef never intended to convey that message to his brothers: "See, it didn't turn out so bad; I gained from it." No, says R' Yerucham. That wasn't his intention.¹

EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS COMES ONLY FROM HASHEM

Yosef's message was: "Hashem prepared, planned and orchestrated this entire episode because Hashem wanted to set up a life support system for you, my brothers." Yosef's point was, לא אתם שלחתם אותי הנה, "Don't even think you were the ones who sent me here. כי האלקים, it was all from Hashem."

The difficulties that occurred are not from you. You're not responsible, and you didn't have any control over this. I could not have avoided being sold as an *eved*.

Hashem wanted me to be sent down to Mitzrayim. And He wanted me to become an *eved* in Mitzrayim, and He wanted me to become the *mishneh l'melech*, the viceroy in Mitzrayim. Hashem did all of this. So, just like you can't take credit for my success, don't take "credit" for the difficulties I went through. R' Yerucham says this is a tremendous *yesod*, a principle of *hashkafas* HaTorah, that most people can't digest. Most people can't begin to digest this.

We've all been subject to the October 7th, Simchas Torah episode.² The barbarity, the cruelty, the anger that it engenders, the vengeance. I keep hearing more and more stories. And it had nothing to do with the people.

People say, "What do you mean?? We saw them do it. This was a ruthless, barbaric act. Unexplainable, inexplicable." No. That's not what it is. Hashem orchestrated the whole thing.

This was Hashem.

Hashem decides for every single individual, whom they would be visited by, how they would be visited, who would be

¹ כי למחיה שלחני א-להים לפניכם וכו', ועתה לא אתם שלחתם אותי הנה כי הא-להים (מה, ה-ח). מכאן יש לנו ללמוד כלל גדול אשר כבר דיבר מזה הרמב"ם והרמב"ן (שמות יח, יא) על פסוק כי בדבר אשר זדו עליהם, כי אמנם לא היה על המצרים ראוי לבא עונש הגדול של עשר מכות, וטביעה בים, אחרי כי השם גזר על ישראל ועבדו וענו אותם, וכבר הודיע זה לאברהם אבינו ע"ה, וא"כ המצרים קיימו דבר ה', ושלוחיו הם, ומה להם להעונש עליהם, אבל העונש בא על המצרים רק על אשר זדו עליהם, וחשבו להכרית אותם מן העולם וכו' וכו', ומפני זה בא עליהם העונש המשחית אותם לגמרי, והעונש הוא על הזדון שחשבו לעשות להם, עיי"ש. מקום הוא לעשות ככל אשר גזר ה' הוא ית', וכן דוד אמר (שמואל ב' טז, י) בעת יצא שמעי בן גרא וקללו קלה נמרצת, כי ה' אמר לו קלל את דוד ומי יאמר מדוע עשית כן, ולא הניח המלך דוד את אבישי בן צרויה אף לנגוע בו. זהו כל הענין אצל יוסף אשר אמר לאחיו אל תעצבו כי למחיה שלחני א-להים לפניכם, ולא כמו שאנו סבורים על פי השגת שכלנו, שהוא רק ענין של הרגעה והשקטה, אשר אח רחמן מתחמד עם אחיו שגמלוהו רעה, והם עכשיו במצב מרוגז מאוד והוא מיטיב עמהם ומרגיעם לאמור: אין דבר, ובפרט שאני גם הרווחתי מכל המעשה, לא כן הוא רוח התורה, לא כלשון בני אדם לשון התורה, לולא הזדון של המצרים אשר חשבו להכרית את בני ישראל מן העולם, לא היה ראוי לבוא עליהם שום עונש, כי פשוט ממש, כי לא הם העושים כלום וכלום, כי הא-להים עשה, הא-להים אנה לידם, הוא אמר ויהי, ומי יאמר לו מדוע עשית כן? והוא מה שאמר יוסף, ועתה לא אתם שלחתם אותי הנה כי הא-להים, והוא כפשוטו ממש, כי כל המעשה נעשה בלעד, אין להם שום יד בדבר, ועל פי דין והלכה צריך הנפגע לחפש אחר היתר להיות בכעס על הפוגע בו, כי כל שקרה אתו הרי בהשגחה עליונה באה לו, ומה לו להמכאוב לו, היתרעם אדם על האבן שנזרקה עליו? השקפה זו היא ברוח התורה, ונקוט כלל זה בדרך. (דעת תורה, פי' מקץ)

² This shiur was given on Dec 17, 2023.

able to hold the door closed in their safe rooms, who would have the door exploded and blown open, who would be chased down, grabbed and seized and driven on a golf cart to Gaza, who would be laid across a motorcycle and taken there, and who would be thrown in the back of a truck. Every single detail was predetermined, preplanned in the בית דין של מעלה.

You should know, Hashem gave Klal Yisrael a warning. Now we're finding out how forewarned they really were. There was a 40-page "*kuntros*" that was prepared, outlining the details of what's going to happen and how it's going to happen. They are trying to pin it on some *rasha* named General Haliva, the intel chief of the IDF. He was the guy who told his underlings, "If you ever again give me a report that's going to sound negative, I'm going to fire you." He's in charge of the security in the southern command. And the intelligence agents under him came numerous times to tell him, "There's something big going down. They're coming to the wall, we see they're preparing with bulldozers, we see they're preparing, they're checking where the security is, they have automatic rifles over there, there's espionage, they're looking where the army bases are." He told them, "Get away from me. You come back again, I'm going to have you fired." So that was Hashem warning these people to make it public, to get the Yidden to do *teshuvah*. That's what it was.

But they weren't *zoche* to do *teshuvah*. They were *reshaim*. The commanders, including Bibi Netanyahu himself, also heard about it. But his Shabak people told him, "Nah, don't worry about it." I don't know what they told him.

This was all from Hakodosh Boruch Hu 1,000%. Every single aspect. It couldn't have been prevented - unless there was that *teshuvah*.

And we read stories about people who were *mamash* already in the turbulence, in the middle of the eye of the storm, who did *teshuvah*, and they were spared. Hashem saved them.

But we're human beings, and we don't accept that everything is done by Hashem. It's very difficult for us.

There was once a man here, many years ago, who came for Shabbos to be with his son. *Nebach*, he just died. I called his son to be *menacheim aveil*. He was a real strong Zionist, a believer in 'the power'. And he hated Yasser Arafat. I once said in a *shiur* that Yasser Arafat is a nobody. He's nothing in the eyes of Hashem. He has no power whatsoever. He can make all his plans day and night, but he's not in charge. Hashem's in charge. This man stood up. "What?" He had a strong Israeli accent. "You say this is from Hashem?" He blew up and marched out of here. I said, "Everything is from Hashem." He couldn't handle it. I can understand him, because if you grow up in a world that believes that human beings have power, and you think that Hashem is just watching the show that human beings are running, so that's how you believe. But there's no such thing.

EVERYONE GETS STEERING WHEELS

I want to share with you a beautiful story. There's a Rav who got a ride in a car with someone. When he got into the car, he saw two steering wheels. One on the driver's side, and one on his side. He looks at the bottom and doesn't see any pedals. He asks the driver, "Are you a driving teacher?" He says, "No." "So, what's this all about?" He says, "I'll tell you. I have a son, and my son happens to be hyperactive. He's a very *lebedike* kid. He can't sit still. Whenever he gets into the car, the first thing he does is to move over right next to me. He grabs the wheel while I'm driving. He wants to drive with me. So, it was getting too dangerous. *Mamash sakanas nefashos*. So, somebody gave me an idea, why don't you install another steering wheel? And that's what I did, as you can see. Now, my son gets into the car and doesn't bother me. He sits down in his seat on the right side, grabs the wheel, makes some noises, and starts driving like crazy all the way, just like his Tatty. He thinks he's driving, but his wheel is not attached to anything. He has no *koach*."

The Rav said, "Wow, that's an amazing lesson. What a lesson! You went out of your way to satisfy your kid's desire, to make him feel like he's in charge. But, in reality, he's not in charge. Hakodosh Boruch Hu does the same thing. Hashem creates steering wheels for everyone. For the presidents, he gives big steering wheels. You go into these trucks, and you see they have these huge steering wheels. That's the type he puts in Bibi Netanyahu's hands. For President Biden, too, he puts a big steering wheel in his hand, and his little underlings get little ones. They get planes to fly around on. And they're all playing the game, thinking that they're actually doing something. They're making noises, they're making threats. 'This has to stop, this doesn't have to stop. It will stop, it won't stop. It'll stop when we say it stops.' These people *hok a cheinik*. And the *emes* is, there's only one steering wheel and only one driver, and that is Hakodosh Boruch Hu."

In Koheles (2:12), Shlomo Hamelech says, ופנית אני לראות חכמה והוללות וסכלות כי מה האדם שיבוא אחרי המלך את אשר כבר עשוהו, "My thoughts also turned to appraising wisdom and madness and folly. For what will the man be like who will succeed the one who is ruling over what was built up long ago?" What is a human being who thinks that he could come after Hashem decided something, and he thinks he could change things?

People relate all actions in the world to themselves or to others. You read now what's going on with the anti-semitism in America. It's crazy. In my lifetime, it has never been so rampant. We think it's the college presidents, we think it's the good PR that the Palestinians have, that this guy has, that that organization has, and so on and so forth. But people forget that it's all Hashem. You can't stop it. You want to have some doxxing trucks running around the campus with pictures on the side of the truck saying this is the biggest anti-semite in New York? Could be. It's Hashem's way also to give a *potch* to that *sheiget*. But the *emes* is we do nothing. Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself is the only one that's עשה, that has done, עושה

that does, ויעשה and will do לכל המעשים. And that's what Shlomo Hamelech is saying: You think it's up to you to change it? There's no such thing. It's all imaginary and make-believe.

There's a famous story about two artists who were in competition. Each one was going to make a painting, and the judges were going to decide who was better, and they were going to win a very big prize. Now, the first painting was amazing. It was a picture of a vineyard, with these fat grapes. If you've noticed, before Sukkos, they sell signs for the Sukkah with these images – pomegranates. When you look at those pomegranates, and you *mamash* want to eat them. You *mamash* think you could pick them right out of the picture. The grapes they have are so real, they're more real than real grapes. So this guy drew such a good picture that birds flying by would stop and try to get a little piece, a taste of the grapes. *Nu*, that was *takke* amazing. The judges were amazed by this painting.

Then the judges turned to the second picture. The problem was that it was completely covered over. So they walked over to it. They saw that there was a curtain covering it. They said to the artist, "Could you please remove the curtain so that we could see what you have to offer?" The guy said, "No, no. I'm backing out of the deal here. I see the first guy's picture is so good, so professional, and so beautiful. I'm *pashut* embarrassed by my picture. Give him the prize." So the judges said to him, "No, in spite of that, we want to see the picture." And one of the judges walks over to the picture, and he wants to remove the curtain. And he was shocked. There wasn't any curtain. It was just a picture of a curtain. They said, "Wow! We were so sure it was a curtain! There's no curtain!" They decided that the second guy was a better artist than the first guy. He *pashut* fooled all the judges. The first guy was able to fool all the birds. The second guy fooled even the judges. So he was the winner.

The *pasuk* (Shmuel 2:2) says: אין צור כאלוקינו. You know what Chazal say that means? אין צייר, there's no artist like Hashem. What does that mean to say? It means that the pictures that Hashem creates are so amazing that He manages to fool all the people. It gives us the thought that maybe that guy is in charge. Maybe he's *takke* doing something. "Maybe I'm doing something?" But the truth of the matter is, everything is being judged and everything is being directed by Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself.

LOOK FOR HASHEM BEHIND A MASK

You have to train yourself to view things in this light. Because, naturally, people can't do that. They insist, "It's so real, it has to be, it's this Arab. It has to be, it's this, this monster." You see the barbarity, look at his face. It has to be. That's a picture, my friend. That's a video. Hashem makes videos. That's what it is. The Ba'al HaTanya talks about this, in his *Igeres HaKodesh* (25).³ He says over there: The Gemara says that anybody who gets angry, it is like he's worshipping *avodah zara*. Why? He says the reason is understandable to people who are יודעי בינה, to people who have a good grasp of things. Because at the time when a person gets upset and angry, his *emunah*, his awareness that everything is from Hashem, departs from him. If he would *takke* believe that everything is from Hashem, he would never get angry! Even though the person who has harmed or cursed him is a בעל בהירה, and that person is הייב בדיני אדם ובדיני שמים for choosing to do what he did, nevertheless, the damage was preordained and predetermined for the ניוק. Just Hashem has many שלוחים. And even at the time that he's getting hit by the person or he's getting cursed by the person, the *koach* of Hashem gets "dressed up," and it doesn't look like it's coming from Hashem. Hashem comes with a mask.

The Ba'al HaTanya points out that when Dovid Hamelech was being cursed by Shimi ben Geira with an awful curse, Dovid's men said, "Should we lift off his head, because he's a ממלכות?" He rebelled against the king, and for that he was *chayav misah*. What did Dovid answer? He said, "No. Leave him, אמר לו קלל, כי ה' אמר לו קלל, Hashem told him to curse me" (II Shmuel 16:10). Now, where did Hashem ever say to Shimi ben Geira to curse Dovid Hamelech? Did he give him a prophecy? No. The Ba'al HaTanya explains that the thought that entered Shimi's head to give him a curse - that came from Hashem! The words that came out of his mouth, the רוה פיו, came from Hashem. Because if Hashem would not have orchestrated that, nothing would come out.

It says (Mishlei 16:1), מה' מענה לשון, "The tongue's reply comes from Hashem." Even after someone decides to say something, it is up to Hashem to decide whether the person will express himself

properly and eloquently. There are many times when I'm speaking, I'm thinking, at this very second Hashem is choosing the words for me, He's articulating my words, and sometimes – to remind me – Hashem makes me forget the word I'm looking for. So I turn to Elchanan (a talmid), and I say, "Elchanan, what's the word I'm looking for?" And he also doesn't know. But somebody else knows. Or sometimes Elchanan does know. That's Hashem just showing it's מה' מענה לשון.

The Beis Yosef, Rav Yosef Karo, experienced in his life people that rose up against him and tried to undermine him. And he was *zocheh* to a *maggid* who revealed a lot of secrets to him. There's a *sefer* called *Maggid Meisharim*, which consists of these teachings. One of the things the *maggid* told him regarding those people who rose up against him was, "Don't even give it a thought because they're not causing you any damage. They're actually benefiting you."

³ כל הפועם כאילו עובד עפ"י וכו', והטעם מובן לידועי בינה, לפי שבעת כעסו נסתלקה ממנו האמונה, כי אילו היה מאמין שמאת ה' היתה זאת לו – לא היה בכעסו כלל. ואף שבו' אדם שהוא בעל בחירה מקללו או מכהו או מזיק ממונו ומתחייב בדיני אדם ובדיני שמים על רוע בחירתו, אף-על-פי-כן, על הפיזק כבר נגזר מן השמים, והרבה שלוחים למקום ולא עוד, אלא אפילו בשעה זו ממש שמפהו או מקללו – מתלבש בו כח ה' ורוח פיו יתברך המתייחד ומקיימו, וכמו שכתוב: "כי ה' אמר לו קלל", והיכן אמר לשמעתי? אלא שמחשבה זו שנפלה לשמעתי בלבד ונמוחו – ירדה מאת ה', ורוח פיו המתייחד כל צבאם" היתה רוחו של שמעי בשעה שדיבר דברים אלו לדוד, כי אילו נסתלק רוח פיו יתברך רגע אחד מרוחו של שמעי – לא יכול לדבר מאומה.

You know why? He said, “Because when they talk *lashon hara* about you, you’re gaining all of their merits that they have. This is because Hashem gives the merits of the people who talk *lashon hara* to the person whom the *lashon hara* was spoken about.”⁴ You hear that? He says that if people would be aware of this, they would be overjoyed when they heard that somebody said something negative about them, as if they handed them a present of gold and silver!

Every thought that a person has and every awareness that he has, is from Hashem. Every *dibur* he has is from Hashem. A person wants to know why he wakes up in the morning in a bad mood. A lot of people wake up in a bad mood, not every day in the same mood. Earlier in my life, when I was a young, married man, I used to wake up sometimes on the left side. My mother explained to me that’s my personality. She said, “People who live exciting lives, with excitement, have ups and then they have downs, emotional, this that.” It bugged the daylights out of me. I said, “I have to analyze this. I want to study this.” And I realized it’s from Hashem. Everything is from Hashem. So I said, “Why does Hashem make me wake up on some days ready to go and some days on the left side?” It’s not real; no one’s bothering you. It has to be that Hashem is giving you a message. It’s from Hashem. And I was able to analyze it and overcome it to the point that, for decades already, I no longer have those experiences, no matter what’s going on. Even if bad things are going on, it doesn’t make a difference. Because it’s all in the hands of Hashem. If you understand that Hashem controls it all, it doesn’t have to be like that.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu should help us. Hakodosh Boruch Hu should guide us, and open up our eyes and our minds to realize that everything is from Hashem. He’s the one Who orchestrates everything. It’s not like things seem on the surface. And as a piece of advice: If you make your peace with Hashem before you go to sleep, you’ll wake up in the morning in a positive mood.

IN CONCLUSION

When Yosef revealed himself to his brothers it seems that he followed it up with words of comfort, but this was not the case. His words were intended to help his brothers realize that the whole episode of Mechiras Yosef, from start to finish, was directed by Hashem. We must learn from this *parsha* that it is the same with every event, great or small. This was true for the attack on the Yidden on October the 7th and with every other enemy that stood up against the Yidden. It is Hashem - and only Hashem - Who is directing events, including our feelings, speech and actions. Hashem lets us think we are doing something. The “movers and shakers” in the world of politics think they are deciding things. The reality is that Hashem makes reality appear so real, that we are fooled into thinking it is real, but it is not. Only Hashem is real. This week, (*bli neder*), I will think at least three times a day about how all the details of my life are being directed by Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself.

⁴ וגם בענין הקמות אשר קמו נגדך אין להרהר כי הם לא יזיקוך אלא הועילו כי מי שאומר לשון הרע על חבירו מנכין לו מזכיותיו ונותנים וכו' הוא אמת ויציב, ואלו הוי ידעי בני נשא דא הוו חדאין כד שמעין דאמרין ביש מנהון, כאלו יהבי לון מתנת כסף או זהב אלא בגין יקרא דאורייתא דילך דדלזלו בה אחזי לכולי עלמא קטירי דיקומון בהון, ואתה תעמוד מנגד ותחזה ותחדי, אבל את לא תהרהר בהאי ולא במלה אחרא רק ביראת ה' כל היום וכל הלילה ובתורת.