



KINDER TORAH

ת"טז

PARASHAS VAYIGASH

HE'S REALLY ALIVE!

"Yosef is still alive!" (Bereshis 45:26). This is one of the most startling statements in the entire Torah. Yaakov Avinu's son, who was missing for twenty-two years, had been found. What thoughts could have been running through Yaakov's mind when he heard these words? "Is it really Yosef? Even if he is still living, where is he? What has he become after twenty-two years outside of his father's house? Perhaps he is an idol worshipper (cholila) or a lowly person who runs after his *tayvas* (desires). Will I even recognize him?" These outcomes were all quite possible.

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin shows how the verse itself conveys the message of Yosef's elevated status. "Yosef is still alive!" Alive? Yes, *really* alive. Who is truly alive? The tsaddik. He is living the true life – the life of Torah – which fills every moment with deep meaning, eternal reward, and nachas to The Almighty and His creations. Yosef is alive – truly alive! He is living the pure life of a tsaddik!

This was no small feat in the land of Mitzrayim – the most immoral place in the world. When the brothers first arrived there, they feared the worst for Yosef. They began to search for him in the bad places. Boruch Hashem, they did not find him there. He withstood the test. Rav Sorotzkin darshens, "He was the ruler in the entire land of Mitzrayim!" He rules over his Yetzer Hora in Mitzrayim – that land filled with *tumah* (impurity).

Yaakov Avinu was still not convinced. What about Yosef's Torah learning? What became of that during the twenty-two years in Mitzrayim? The verse again reveals the answer to this question. "However, when they related to him all the things that Yosef had told them, and he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him, then the spirit of Yaakov, their father, was revived" (45:27). Rashi interprets this verse to mean that Yosef sent Yaakov a sign that he had not forgotten the Torah that they learned together. When Yosef was taken away, they were in the midst of learning the parasha of "*egla arufa*." Yosef sent "*agalos*" to his father Yaakov. "*Egla*" and "*agala*" are the same word. Those "*agalos*" conveyed to Yaakov that Yosef had not forgotten the "*egla arufa*." He remained strong in his Torah learning! And so, we see that Yosef was alive – truly alive. He ruled over his Yetzer Hora, and learned Torah. This is

the life of a tsaddik – the true life.

Kinderlach . . .

There is living and there is living. As long as the neshama (soul) is in the guf (body), a person is technically alive. However, what is he doing? Eating, sleeping, and looking for petty pleasures? That is a low level of living. Rav Sorotzkin describes a much higher level of living: working on yourself to overcome your Yetzer Hora. Rashi adds: learning Torah and remembering it (even after twenty-two years). This is living on a higher plane. This is the life of a tsaddik. We have Yosef as our example of how to live life. After all those years, he was really alive.



IT'S EMBARRASSING TO EMBARRASS

"Eli how are you? It's so good to see you. What's the matter, you look a little upset."

"I'll be okay Doni. It's really nothing, I suppose."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"Well, Doni, a very embarrassing thing just happened to me."

"Oy vey."

"Yesterday I told a personal secret to a very good friend. I told him not to tell anyone, because it was very personal. Today three or four people came to me and asked me about the secret. I was so embarrassed that they knew about it. I feel terrible."

"Eli, now I understand what our sages wrote in the Gemora Bava Metzia, that embarrassing someone is like spilling their blood. I see how awful you feel from the embarrassment. You know, Eli, we can learn a lesson from everything that happens to us in life. I know that I have learned never to embarrass any-

one."

"Doni, do you know that Yosef HaTzaddik, put his own life in danger to avoid embarrassing his brothers?"

"Really? What happened?"

"Here is the scenario. Yosef's brothers stood in front of the leader of Mitzrayim, his servants, and guards. Little did they know that this powerful ruler was none other than their own brother Yosef, whom they had sold as a slave to a band of travelers many years earlier. He had made his way to Mitzrayim and had risen to the position of second-in-command to the king. In his capacity as ruler, he had treated them harshly, giving them good reason to resent him. Now, he realized that the time had come to reveal his identity to his brothers. What should he do? To divulge his secret in the presence of the Mitzrim would cause them great shame and embarrassment. It would become public knowledge that they once sold their own brother as a slave, a shameful act. To send all of the Mitzrim guards out of the room would be very dangerous. Yosef would be alone with the people whom he had treated so harshly. If they chose to kill him, no one could stop them."

"Tell me Eli, how did Yosef deal with this dilemma?"

"Doni, our sages tell us in Gemora Kesuvos, 'It is better for a person to throw himself into a fiery furnace than to shame someone in public.' Yosef HaTzaddik risked danger to his own life rather than humiliate his brothers."

Kinderlach . . .

Before you say something about someone, think twice. Then think again. Could this thing be embarrassing? He got a low grade on the test. Her clothes are not so nice. He is always late. He is doing much better than last year. The teacher reprimanded her today. All of these things, besides being lishon hora, can also be embarrassing. We learn from Yosef HaTzaddik how terrible it is to embarrass someone. Don't get caught. Stop before you say it.

Parasha Questions:

- What happened to Yaakov when he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent? Why? (45:27 and Rashi)
- Who must a person honor more – his father or his grandfather? (Rashi 46:1)
- What did Yaakov do with the possessions that he acquired in Padan Aram? Why? (Rashi 46:6)

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