

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Vayigash

For the week ending 7 Teves 5759
25 & 26 December 1998

Parsha Questions

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?
6. Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?
7. Why did Yosef send old wine to Yaakov?
8. What did Yosef mean when he said "Don't dispute on the way?"
9. What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?
10. Why did G-d tell Yaakov, "Don't fear going down to Egypt?"
11. "I will bring you up" from Egypt. To what did this allude?
12. What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?
13. Who was the mother of Shaul ben HaCanaanis?
14. When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?
15. Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?
16. Why were shepherds abhorrent to the Egyptians?
17. Why did Yosef pick the weakest brothers to stand before Pharaoh?
18. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left his presence?
19. Yosef resettled the land of Egypt, moving the people from city to city. What were his two motives for this?
20. Whose fields were not bought by Yosef?

Sherlox and the Chariot Mystery

"The first clue to a mystery," said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes, "is the motive. And to discern a person's motive, you sometimes have to consider all his actions."

"Speaking of motives," said Watstein, "I'm puzzled. The verse says that Yosef 'harnessed his chariot and arose to meet his father....' " (Genesis 46:29).

"Indeed strange," said Sherlock, "that the viceroy of Egypt should do the work of a stable boy."

"Rashi explains that by harnessing the chariot himself, Yosef was acting with alacrity in order to give honor to his father."

" 'Love spoils protocol.' Isn't that the expression?" asked Sherlock.

"Yes! Or rather, no!" said Watstein. "What I mean is, I expected Rashi to say exactly that, but he didn't. I expected Rashi to say: 'Love spoils protocol,' just as he explains regarding Avraham."

"Please elaborate," said Sherlock.

"The phrase 'love spoils protocol' is the expression Rashi uses to explain an identical scenario: Avraham saddling his own donkey. (Genesis 22:3) Avraham was commanded to journey to a distant mountain and to sacrifice his son there. Because of his great love for G-d, Avraham undertook this journey. And although it was beneath Avraham's dignity to saddle his own donkey, Avraham did so nevertheless, as Rashi there explains, because 'love spoils protocol.' "

"So your question is: Why doesn't Rashi say the same thing here?" asked Sherlock.

"Exactly! Why doesn't Rashi say "Yosef harnessed his own chariot because 'love spoils protocol'" Yosef loved his father dearly and hadn't seen him since he was a boy 22 years ago. Wouldn't Yosef's love be enough to explain his unusual behavior? Why must Rashi say it was the desire to honor, not love, that motivated Yosef?"

"To discern a person's motive," said Sherlock, "you sometimes have to consider all his actions."

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Parshas Vayigash — 7 Teves 5759, 25 & 26 December 1998

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Answer

“When you considering *all* Yosef’s actions, it’s clear that his primary motivation was to honor his father,” said Sherlox.

“How so?” asked Watstein.

“Simple. Look at the rest of the verse: Yosef ‘harnessed his chariot and went up towards Israel his father in Goshen and he appeared to him....’ Rashi comments: ‘Yosef appeared to Yaakov.’”

“So?” said Watstein.

“Didn’t Yosef also *see* Yaakov?”

“Ah!” said Watstein. “Yosef *saw* Yaakov, yet the verse stresses that Yosef ‘*appeared*’ to Yaakov!”

“Exactly. By stressing that Yosef *appeared* to his father, it tells us of Yosef’s main intent. His main intent was to *be seen* by his father.”

“I see!” said Watstein. “Yosef certainly yearned to *see* his beloved father, yet his major motive was to do his father’s will by *appearing* before him. He came not primarily to see, but to be seen. Hence, regarding harnessing the chariot, Rashi ascribes to Yosef his major motive, i.e., honoring his father.”

(*Sherlox*” is by Reuven Subar,

inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s “What’s Bothering Rashi”)

I Did Not Know That!

Yosef said to his brothers: “I am Yosef...” (Bereishis 45:3) Yosef said to his brothers: “Draw near to me...I am Yosef your brother whom you sold to Egypt.” (Bereishis 45:3)

At first, Yosef said merely “I am Yosef.” He didn’t mention his sale into slavery because Binyamin was listening. Binyamin didn’t know about the sale, and Yosef didn’t want to embarrass the brothers in front of Binyamin.

Then, Yosef told his brothers to “draw near,” and he separated them from Binyamin. Only then, out of Binyamin’s earshot, did Yosef say “I am Yosef your brother, whom you sold to Egypt.”

Da’as Zekenim m’Ba’alei Hatosefos

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

44:19	Yehuda’s Diplomacy
45:16	Egyptian Reaction to Yosef’s Brothers
45:26	Yaakov’s Disbelief
45:27	The Lifetime Secret
46:15	Hidden Miracles
46:29	Who Cried?
47:9	Yaakov’s Age
47:18	The Seven Lean Years

Sforno

45:16	Pharaoh’s Invitation
46:3	The Advantage of Exile

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh

45:26	Why Yosef Didn’t Tell Yaakov
46:4	The <i>Shechina</i> in Mitzrayim

Answers to this Week’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

- 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham; alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
- 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
- 44:32 - He was the one who took “soul” responsibility for him.
- 45:9 - We learn that *Eretz Yisrael* is higher than all other lands.
- 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke *Lashon Hakodesh*.
- 45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of *Mishkan Shilo* built in Yosef’s territory.
- 45:23 - Elderly people appreciate old wine.
- 45:24 - He warned that if they engage in halachic disputes, they might not be alert to possible travel dangers.
- 45:27 - His *ruach hakodesh* (prophetic spirit) returned.
- 46:3 - Because Yaakov was grieved to leave Eretz Canaan.
- 46:4 - That Yaakov would be buried in Eretz Canaan.
- 46:6 - He traded it for Esav’s portion in the Cave of Machpelah.
- 46:10 - Dina bas Yaakov.
- 46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the mainstay of the house.
- 46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honor his father.
- 46:34 - Because the Egyptians worshipped sheep.
- 47:2 - So Pharaoh wouldn’t see their strength and draft them.
- 47:10 - That the waters of the Nile should rise to greet Pharaoh.
- 47:21 - In order to remind them that they no longer owned the land, and to help his family by removing the stigma of being strangers.
- 47:22 - The Egyptian priests.