



Kindert Torah

Parashas Vayigash



Royal Blood

"Hi Imma, I'm home from school."
"Hello, Avi. How do you feel? You must be hungry. Here is an apple for you. Lunch will be ready in a few minutes."

"Thank you Imma. This apple sure is yummy. Imma, can you help me with my homework assignment?"

"I'll try, Avi dear."

"We have to draw a family tree, and speak about some of the accomplishments of our ancestors."

"That is a big job, Avi. Let me think for a minute where we should begin. In the meantime, here is your lunch. Start with this bowl of hot soup."

"Imma, you're a great cook."

"Avi, my grandfather came to the United States when he was a young child. He was born in a *shtetl* in Eastern Europe. His family had lived there for many generations. His grandfather was the Rav of the *shtetl*."

"Really, Imma? We have an ancestor who was a Rav in Eastern Europe?"

"That's right Avi. He was a big Talmid Chochom. He learned through the entire Talmud fifty times. He also knew the Shulchan Aruch. He was able to *poskin* (make halachic decisions) in all areas of Jewish law."

"That's really something, Imma. I never knew about him."

"He was a well respected man, Avi."

"I really feel different about myself and our family, now that I know that we had such a special great-grandfather."

"If you trace our family tree back farther, you will find even greater people, Avi."

"Please tell me about them Imma. I am so interested."

"Let's begin at the beginning. Avraham Avinu was the first Jew. He had a son named Yitzchak, who had a son named Yaakov. Yaakov had twelve sons, who became the heads of the tribes of Israel. Yosef, his second youngest son was sold as a slave and taken down to Mitzraim. There he was thrown into prison on false charges. However, Hashem was with him the entire time, and he was miraculously freed from prison to become the second in command to Paroh, the King of Egypt."

"That is truly amazing."

"It certainly is, Avi, but Paroh and his other officers were not completely happy with it. They recognized Yosef's great skills, and Heavenly blessings. However, it was still a disgrace to Egypt, the world's leading nation, to have a leader who was once a lowly slave."

"We know how important royal blood is."

"Right, Avi. The verse in this week's parasha explains how pleased they were when Yosef revealed his identity to his brothers. 'And the word spread into the house of Paroh that Yosef's brothers had

arrived. And the matter was good in the eyes of Paroh and in the eyes of his servants.' (Bereshis 45:16)."

"What was so good about the news, Imma?"

"The Ramban explains that Paroh and his servants now saw that Yosef came from a highly respected family. They saw that a man of his lineage was truly fit to sit in the royal court. Therefore they were happy."

"Please tell me more, Imma."

"The famine was supposed to last for seven years. When Yaakov came to Egypt, the famine stopped. This was not the first time that prosperity followed him. Lavan became a wealthy man during his stay in his household. Yaakov Avinu was man whose righteousness was world renown and respected."

"He was our ancestor."

"That's right, Avi. We are all descended from him. We have royal blood in our veins."

"Imma, that makes me feel very good."



Kinderlach . . .

In our day and age, many people are searching for their identity. The Jewish people have never had such an "identity crisis." We know exactly who we are. We are the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Our ancestors include the world's greatest people - Moshe Rabbeinu, Miriam, Pinchas, Yehoshua, Shmuel HaNovi, Dovid HaMelech, Yirmiyahu, Rebbe Akiva, Rachel, Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai, the Rambam, Rashi, Rav Yosef Karo, The Arizal. The list can go on and on. We would need a lot of paper to draw our family tree. We would need even more paper to write about all of their accomplishments. B'ezrat Hashem, our deeds should measure up to their standards.

Define Yourself

"And it will be when Paroh summons you and says, 'What is your occupation?'" (Bereshis 46:33). Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch zt"l points out that in a country such as Egypt a person is defined by his work. A person is not born as a person, rather as a worker, farmer, soldier, etc. In such a place, we understand that the first

question that Paroh would ask the person is about his occupation. That is the most important thing in the world about that person.

What is most important to us? "He sent Yehuda ahead to Yosef to prepare ahead in Goshen" (Bereshis 46:28). What did Yehuda prepare? Rashi explains that Yehuda went ahead to set up a Beis HaMedrash. The Shlah HaKodesh learns an important principle from this. The foremost consideration in a person's mind must always be his spiritual needs. When he builds a new home, he should first plan to build a room where he can learn and pray. Then he can finish planning the rest of the house.

What is our attitude about a person's work? The Chofetz Chaim relates a parable based on the verse, "Yosef sustained his father and his brothers and all of his father's household with food . . ." (Bereshis 47:12). A king once went to visit his soldiers and appease them. He sent word ahead that anyone who had a request should come forward and ask the king. One soldier approached the king and requested with a complete heart that the king should supply him with his meals every day. The soldier's friends laughed at him. You are asking for something that you already have. The king has already promised to feed all of the soldiers in the army. So too it is with us, continues the Chofetz Chaim. Hashem has already told us that he will feed us, as we say in the daily prayers, "He sustains the living with loving kindness," and in the Bircas HaMazone, "for He is the merciful G-d Who feeds and supports everyone."

Kinderlach . . .

Who are we? We have many things to do in our lives. We begin as children, and students. As we become older we marry and become parents, neighbors, workers, teachers, etc. These are all roles that we fulfill. What is important to us? What is the focus of our lives? Not the occupation, as with Paroh. Rather the spiritual work, as with Yehuda. That is the most important part of our day. That is what really interests us. That is what "makes us tick".

Parasha Questions

- What caused Yehuda to lie? (Rashi 44:20)
- Who was with Yosef when he confessed to his brothers? (45:1)
- What are the names of the 70 souls who went down to Mitzraim? (46:27)
- What did Yaakov do when he saw Yosef? (Rashi 46:29)
- Who owned all the land of Mitzraim? (47:20)
- Which people were not relocated? (47:22)

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