



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

No Shiur This Shabbos

Please note as the Rov is away this Shabbos there will be no Shabbos afternoon Shiur.

The Final Breakaway

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

These are the names of the Children of Israel who came to Egypt with Ya'akov. Shemos 1:1

IT IS ONE OF THOSE TIMES that something very small means a lot. It's only a letter Vav, but it tells a tremendous amount about what follows it, and has a lesson to teach for all generations of Jews since. It's not even as if it stands out.

This week's parshah is the first of the second book of the Torah, "Shemos." As such, it stands apart from what came before it, which was all of Sefer Bereishis. It is obviously connected to the previous parshios, as the first verse of this week's parshah indicates. It discusses the journey of Ya'akov's family down to Egypt which actually occurred back in Parashas Vayigash.

This connection however would have just as easily been maintained had the parshah begun, "Eileh Shemos B'nai Yisroel," and not "V'Eileh Shemos, etc.," without the letter Vav. For this reason the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh provides a few explanations as to what the "extra" Vav is here to point out.

One such explanation is that the Vav connects the going down of the family of Ya'akov to Egypt with the prophecy that predicted the exile in the Bris Ben HaBesarim:

He said to Avram, "You shall surely know that your seed will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and oppress them for 400 years..." (Bereishis 15:13)

The only thing is that the verse does not name Egypt as the place of exile or oppression. According to the Rambam, it did not have to be Egypt. Yet, the Ohr HaChaim points out, when Ya'akov and his sons descended to Egypt, they knew Egypt was going to be the place—and they went anyhow. They knowingly and willingly went into an exile that was going to be hard for their descendants.

This was unlike Eisav, the Ohr HaChaim points out. When Eisav begged his father Yitzchak for a blessing, part of that blessing ended up including servitude of his younger and hated brother, Ya'akov. What did Eisav do? Unlike Ya'akov's descendants, he ran in the opposite direction to another land altogether to avoid the fulfillment of the prophecy.

One could argue, what did the brothers have to lose? After all, their brother was in charge of the country. Pharaoh, at the time, respected them. Clearly whatever would happen to them in Egypt would be better than starving to death in Canaan. Perhaps by the time the famine ended they would find a way to leave Egypt and return home before any of the bad stuff actually began for their children.

That's the point. Yosef's brothers were fully aware the prophecy. They knew it meant that once they went down to Egypt the door locked after them. Since their entire lives came down to fathering a nation that would continue the legacy of their ancestors, it can be assumed that it was not easy for them to put that future nation into such peril. The knowledge of what was to come impacted the quality of their own lives.

They also knew that Egypt was not going to be the last exile for the Jewish people, but only one of five that would span all of Jewish history with only a couple of brief intermissions. They knew there was going to be a Babylonian, Median, Greek, and Roman exile that would take the Jewish people all the way to the Final Redemption.

Now, here we are, close to the end of what began with them thousands of years earlier. Ironically, the Final Redemption is compared to the first one, referred to as "like the days of leaving Egypt." I've already pointed out how "Mitzrayim" means "boundaried 50," which is exactly what the United States of America is: 50 boundaried states.

Having said that, I want to point out something that was pointed out to me recently by a friend of mine. It impressed me.

The Jewish year at present is 5776. I wrote a book called "2016" because of the potential of this year to be the one that finally results in redemption. My friend "just happened" to point out to me that the number 5776 is actually a square of 76 x 76, which in Kabbalah is not only significant, it is redemption-oriented.

What fascinated me though was something else he pointed out regarding the number 76 itself, based upon the following verse. It is from Parashas Toldos, when Ya'akov was preparing the mourner's meal for his father Yitzchak, who just lost his father, Avraham. Eisav had just come home starving to death. Pillaging and murdering had taken its toll on Eisav, and he was literally starving to the point of death.

Lucky for him, Ya'akov had supper on. Unlucky for him, Ya'akov used the opportunity to acquire the right of the firstborn from Eisav, who gladly gave it up for a pot full of red lentils. Not before, however, Eisav swore to him that he would not go back on his part of the bargain:

And Ya'akov said, "Sell me as of this day your birthright." Eisav replied, "Behold, I am going to die, so why do I need this birthright?" Ya'akov said, "Swear to me as of this day," so he swore to him, and he sold his birthright to Ya'akov. (Bereishis 25:31-33)

It is not difficult to figure out why Ya'akov Avinu used Eisav's desperation as a means to wrangle the birthright away from him. Clearly Eisav was unfit to assume the leadership of the Jewish people, and certainly to be the line of kohanim in the future.

There is one word however that Ya'akov uses that is unusual: as of this day—kayom—which is spelled Chof-Yud-Vav-Mem. In fact, it is unusual enough that Rashi deemed it necessary to explain it:

Sell me as of this day: As the Targum renders it, "like this day," meaning that just as this day is clear, sell it to me with a clear sale.

The Week Ahead

פרשת שמות

Candle Lighting	3.44pm
Mincha	3.49pm
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.18am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
2nd Mincha	3.49pm
סעודה שלישית	following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	4.59pm
Ovos uBonim	6.14pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	3.50pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

Even more interesting is that Ya'akov uses the same word twice: Ya'akov said, "Swear to me as of this day—kayom" so he swore to him, and he sold his birthright to Ya'akov.

Why is this so interesting? Because the gematria of "kayom" is: 20 + 10 + 6 + 40, or 76. The fact that the word is used twice means that this gematria of 76 occurs twice.

This interests me in particular because I have long pointed out that it has been long pointed out that the final act of Jewish, and therefore world history comes down to a "showdown" between the Ya'akov element of the Jewish people and the Yisroel element of the Jewish people. The Malbim articulated this as follows:

At the end of their exile, the oppression will be removed from them, and they will be joyous because they will be on the peak of the nations. The gentiles will give them honor and they will be their heads, instead of being disgraced and lowered amongst them as they were at first. Ya'akov will be the masses of the people, and the lesser amongst them; Yisroel are the great ones. The joyousness from being at the peak of the nations will be Ya'akov's only, and not Yisroel's, because they will want to return His Presence to Tzion. However, at that time they will "announce" and publicly proclaim, and "praise" G-d when they say, "O G-d, save Your [righteous] people, the remnant of Yisroel," because they will want the true salvation of the ingathering of the exiles and return to Tzion. Then it will be like that, that G-d will return them: "Behold, I will bring them . . ." (Malbim, Yirmiyahu 31:6-8)

The essential difference between "Ya'akov" and "Yisroel" is that the former is not only the twin brother of Eisav, he even holds onto his heel. This gives Ya'akov the potential to be just like Eisav, and in some cases, even worse, as the Talmud states (Beitzah 25b) and history has shown.

Yisroel, on the other hand, rises above his Eisav-like tendencies and overcomes them. He takes the good that is in Eisav and uses it in the service of G-d, resulting in leaders and servants of G-d like Dovid HaMelech. He was also red, ruddy, and blood-stained, but always for the sake of G-d and ultimate truth.

Historically, there has only really been one break-away point between Ya'akov and Eisav, and that was on Ya'akov's return from Padan Aram when they met along the way. There Ya'akov tells Eisav:

[Eisav] said, "Travel and we will go, and I will go alongside you."

[Ya'akov] said to him, "My master knows that the children are tender, and the flocks and the cattle, which are raising their young, depend upon me, and if they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die. Now, let my master go ahead before his servant, and I will move [at] my own slow pace, according to the pace of the work that is before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my master, to Seir." (Bereishis 32:12-14)

It is at that this point that Eisav goes his way and Ya'akov goes his, at least for the next couple of thousand years. This is because Ya'akov knows that exile will bring their descendants together again, violently at first, but peacefully in the end, in the time of Moshiach:

Until I come to my master, to Seir: [Ya'akov] told him of a longer journey, although he intended to go only as far as Succos. [Ya'akov] said [to himself], "If [Eisav] intends to harm me, he will wait until I come to him," but [Ya'akov] did not go [to Seir]. So when will [Ya'akov] go? In the days of Moshiach, as it says, "And saviors shall ascend Mt. Tzion to judge the mountain of Eisav" (Ovadia 1:21). (Rashi)

Just as their first historical confrontation was to decide who really owned the right of the firstborn, the final encounter at the end of history will similarly be for this purpose. It will be to prove who is the real firstborn, the descendants of Ya'akov or the descendants of Eisav. This has been the ongoing struggle throughout history and the underlying reason for anti-Semitism.

The descendants of both brothers won't necessarily know this or talk about it in this way, but this will be the essence of the final conflict. Eisav will take one last shot at reneging on his oath to Ya'akov Avinu and recover the birthright and all the blessings that come with it. Perhaps this will occur in the year that is the result of 76 times 76, or 5776.

What kind of war will this be? It will depend. Sometimes it will be physical. Other times it will be spiritual. Either way it will to accomplish the same end: undermine the Jewish people's right to be G-d's chosen firstborn.

Remember, the Jewish people have to prove that we're worthy of being the firstborn. Eisav just has to prove that we're not. His job is easier, but we have no choice but to succeed. One of the scarier things the Holocaust

taught us is that falling short of the right to be the "firstborn" is not simply being able to walk away from it. If we don't pursue the right to be a Yisroel, in the end, it will stalk us.

The True Mark of an Adam Gadol

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

The pasuk in Parshas Shmos says: "The boy grew up (vayigdal hayeled) and she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh and he was a son to her..." [Shmos 2:10] The next pasuk states, "It happened in those days that Moshe grew up (vayigdal Moshe) and went out to see his brethren and he saw their burdens..." Rashi comments on the apparent redundancy of the term vayigdal [and he grew up]. As we have mentioned in previous years, the pasukim refer to different types of maturity. Vayigdal hayeled is referring to the fact that Moshe became physically a bigger child. However, the words vayigdal Moshe teach us that Moshe became a Gadol in the sense that we say "an adam Gadol" – a great person.

Moshe became a great person by virtue of one thing: He went out to his brethren and saw their burdens. Moshe had the option of remaining in the lap of luxury in Pharaoh's palace and turning a blind eye to his Jewish brethren. However, he chose otherwise. As Rashi says, "He focused his eyes and heart to be distressed over them." The true mark of greatness is when a person expands his own universe and both thinks and cares about other people.

The resume of Moshe Rabbeinu up until the point where he is given his mission to take the Jews out of Egypt is extremely thin. There are very few things we know about his early life. However, the few incidents we do know about those years have a common thread – feeling compassion for a fellow Jew. This defines greatness. He had the ability to expand his concerns and his horizons and not just think about himself. The extent to which a person can feel the sense of pain of another is a mark of a person's own greatness.

A famous Gemara [Megillah 28a] discusses the reasons various Amoraim attributed to their own longevity. Rav Zeira explained to his disciples that he felt he merited his long life because (among other reasons given), "I was never happy at the downfall of my friend". A basic philosophy of the Torah is "When your enemy falls, do not rejoice." [Mishlei 24:17]. However, when we think about Rav Zeira's comment about himself, it does not seem to represent personal greatness. It merely seems like basic decency on the part of the Rabbinic scholar.

I once saw – in a Chassidische Sefer – that the expression "I did not rejoice at the downfall of my friend" ("lo sasti b'takalas chaveiree") means "When I was celebrating a personal simcha and heard that another Jew had a downfall, I could no longer rejoice even at my own simcha, knowing that another Jew was in pain." I had a legitimate reason to be happy: I married off a child, a baby was born to my wife and I, whatever it may be – but if I knew someone else was suffering, I could not fully rejoice at my own simcha, because of the compassion and empathy I had for that other person.

This is the concept of "Vayigdal Moshe" – he became a Gadol [great person] because "Vayare b'sivosam" – he saw the suffering of his brothers: "He focused his eyes and heart to be distressed over them."

In September 1970, Rav Hutner, zt"l, was held hostage by Palestinian terrorists who hijacked the plane on which he was flying from Israel to New York. He and his fellow Jewish passengers were hostages in Jordan for several weeks. Finally, Rav Hutner was released. When Rav Hutner arrived back to America, his students and admirers made a huge welcoming reception at a hangar in Kennedy Airport. Thousands of people came. All of Yeshivas Chaim Berlin came, almost all of Brooklyn came, the entire Yeshiva world came.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, was among those who came to welcome his colleague. Rav Moshe walked into the hangar and observed the singing and dancing and music. Rav Moshe walked over to the band and ordered them to stop playing. He observed, "Rav Hutner is back and it is a tremendous simcha. He is a great man and we have to celebrate his return home. However, there are seven other families in Flatbush whose relatives are still held in captivity. How can we have a band playing when there are still other Jews who do not know whether their relatives are going to live or die?"

This is the attribute practiced by Rav Zeira: "I could not rejoice when my friend had a downfall." This is a function of Vayigdal Moshe. The true measure of the greatness of a person is the measure of the expanse of his universe. A person caring for others almost as much as he cares for himself is the true mark of an Adam Gadol.