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## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

### פרשת ויגש

וַיִּגְדּוּ לוֹ לֵאמֹר עוֹד יוֹסֵף חַי וְכִי הוּא מִשְׁלַל בְּכָל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, וַיִּפֶּגַע לְבָבוֹ כִּי לֹא הָאֱמִינִן לָהֶם. וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֵלָיו אֶת כָּל דִּבְרֵי יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵהֶם, וַיֵּרָא אֶת הָעֲגָלוֹת אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח יוֹסֵף לְשֵׂאת אֹתוֹ, וַתַּחֲי רֹחַ יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיהֶם. (בראשית מה, כו-כז)  
*And they told him, saying, "Yosef is still alive," and that he is ruler over the entire land of Mitzrayim; but he had a turn of heart, for he did not believe them. And they related to him all the words of Yosef that he had spoken to them, and he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him, and then the spirit of their father Yakov was revived. (Bereishis 45:26-27)*

This week's *Sidrah* recounts how Yakov Avinu initially struggled to believe the news that his son Yosef was still alive. It was only after he saw the wagons - which Rashi explains were a message from Yosef about the subject they had been learning before they parted - that Yakov was able to accept the fact that Yosef was indeed alive.

There are several questions to consider. Firstly, what about the news was so unbelievable that Yakov failed to trust his children? Additionally, Rashi (42:1) cites the Midrash, stating that Yakov knew from Heaven that there was some hope in Mitzrayim, (but this vision did not constitute an actual prophecy clearly indicating that Yosef was alive). If that is the case, why was Yakov so shocked and disbelieving when he was finally informed that Yosef was indeed alive and well? Furthermore, the *possuk* (37:35) states that Yakov refused to be comforted, and Rashi explains this reaction by noting that a person cannot accept consolation for a live person whom he believes to be dead. Could Yakov not have seen this as a sign that Yosef had not perished?

Lastly, if we can answer the above questions, what major revelation did Yakov experience upon seeing the wagons that Yosef sent? How did this sight prove Yosef's well-being?

R' Elyah Lopian explains that Yakov understood that Yosef may be physically alive; however, he had difficulty believing that Yosef remained committed to the Torah and *mitzvos*. It was hard for Yakov to accept that a young, handsome, and unmarried boy could withstand temptation in a country notorious for its immorality and corruption. Additionally, the fact that Yosef held a position of power only intensified Yakov's doubts about Yosef's ability to stay untainted by his environment.

Accordingly, the message Yosef sent to Yakov through the wagons was clear: he remained connected to the Torah and the teachings they had learned together before parting ways. Upon hearing this, Yakov became confident that Yosef had managed to preserve his spirituality over the years.

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 30b) states that Hashem says: בְּרַאתִי יֵצֶר הָרַע, בְּרַאתִי תוֹרָה תִּבְלִין, *I created the yetzer hora, and I created the Torah as its antidote*. This teaches that one who dedicates themselves to learning Torah can protect themselves from the influence of the *yetzer hora*. Therefore, Yakov realised that if Yosef had maintained his connection to the Torah, it was indeed possible for him to be spiritually alive and untouched by the widespread sins and impurities of Mitzrayim.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* illustrates the above explanation with an incredible story about the Vilna Gaon. Once, a newly married husband abandoned his young wife shortly after their marriage, leaving no clue about his whereabouts. This left her in the unfortunate situation of being an *agunah*, unable to remarry.

Many years later, a man appeared claiming to be the missing husband. He expressed deep remorse and a desire to renew their marriage, providing numerous specific details from their brief time together. While the family felt overjoyed at this revelation, the wife had an uneasy feeling about this man and remained unsure if he was truly her long-lost husband. The local Beis Din, uncertain about how to proceed, sought counsel from the Vilna Gaon regarding this sensitive situation.

After listening carefully to all the details, the Vilna Gaon advised the woman's father to take the man with him to davening on Shabbos. The father was to find a way to encourage the man to go ahead of him and direct him to take his designated seat from after his *chasunah*. The plan was executed, but the man was confused, not knowing where to go. Following this, the Dayanim brought him in for further questioning, and under interrogation, he broke down and confessed that he was not the actual husband. Instead, he had met the real husband and used the details he learned from him to impersonate him. With this confession, both the man and the woman were spared from sin, and shortly after, the true husband returned.

The Vilna Gaon explained to the Dayanim the reasoning behind his experiment. He noted that a man who appears recalling so many precise details from so many years ago should certainly remember something as important as where he sat in *shul* after his *chasunah*. If this individual could not remember such a significant detail, it was a sign that he was a charlatan, having gained all his knowledge from meeting the actual runaway husband. The Gaon further rationalised why this person who had made sure to learn so many details had forgotten about this one; someone who fills his mind with thoughts of sin and impurity would not even consider matters of holiness, such as where to sit in *shul*. A man who could entertain thoughts of *aveirah* and *tumah* to live with a married woman would not reflect on matters of *kedushah*.

This enhances our understanding of R' Elyah's explanation. If Yosef had, *chas veshalom*, succumbed to the temptations of sin and impurity in Mitzrayim, there is no way he could have recalled the subject matter he learned with Yakov over twenty years ago. The sending of the wagons, which represented the last topic Yosef studied with his father, is the greatest evidence that his mind remained focused solely on thoughts of Torah and *kedushah*.

Let us take this lesson from the *Sidrah*. The Torah is the only antidote for navigating a world that constantly bombards us with sin and impurity. Just as Yosef was able to maintain his elevated spiritual state through his connection to Torah, even in an environment that was completely opposed to holiness, we too can remain strong through Torah. Furthermore, we must remember that thoughts of *kedushah* can only thrive in an atmosphere free from *tumah*. By keeping our minds pure, we allow ourselves to flourish in *ruchniyus*!

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to [parshasheet@gyalumni.org](mailto:parshasheet@gyalumni.org).