

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 7 Tevet 5786, corresponding to December 27, 2025.

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 250 AS) (p. 169 Hz) (p. 277 S) (p. 188 Hi)
VAYIGASH וַיִּגַּשׁ
Genesis 44:18
Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED)

1. We have to ask the question: For how long will Yosef keep the masquerade going and not reveal himself to the family? My take is that Yosef believed that his dreams when he was a teenager were actual prophecies, and therefore Yosef was going to keep the viceroy disguise going until all the brothers will bow down to him in fulfillment of the second dream in particular. But he also wants to hear that they regretted selling him and that they were not jealous of Binyamin's special status in the family. Within Yehudah's lengthy speech in the beginning of Vayigash, we note aspects of these facts, which lead to Yosef's dropping the disguise and revealing himself. The fact that Yosef believed his dreams to be prophecies helps us accept that Yosef never sent word to his father that he was alive and well in Egypt, causing his father to endure continued years of sadness and mourning. (RED)

2. When Yosef finally does reveal himself, he immediately asks (again): Is my father still alive? The Oznam LaTorah states that when he asked this question before, it was in the middle of the viceroy's interrogation of the brothers being spies. Under the pressure of the accusation, Yosef felt that the brothers would lie, under those circumstances. Now he will get a more truthful answer. We can add to this commentary that Yosef could have been asking a deeper question. Is my father fully aware mentally of his position in life. Is he in very good health physically, emotionally, and mentally? A great deal could have changed in the 22 years since Yosef disappeared. I do note that Yosef did not ask about his grandparents, Yitzchak and Rivkah. Or maybe he did, and the Torah does not mention it.

3. Once he revealed himself, then Yosef said: Hurry, go up to my father... (45:9). Now there can be no excuse to delay getting the news to Yaakov. This would remove the sadness and mourning. And then there will be a need to adjust to the news that Yosef was the ruler of Egypt, the major country in the world at that time. Furthermore Yosef was desiring that Yaakov leave Eretz Yisrael and come live in Egypt. This is a major request, one that would require divine permission to do. Yosef had already received permission from Pharaoh, and was assuming that Hashem would agree as well, since there were 5 more years left to the famine. That assumption was a daring one for Yosef to make. Had it not been that the whole family knew that Hashem had told Avraham that his offspring would experience centuries of slavery in a foreign land, the clock was ticking on that prophecy. I am sure that this prophecy was on their minds as well.

4. Goshen was the perfect choice for the residence of the Jewish tribe coming from Eretz Yisrael. Firstly, it was northeast of Cairo, closest to Eretz Yisrael, a fact pointed out by Baalei Tosfot. Being close to Israel is one thing, but they would be also close to Yosef who would need to commute between Goshen and Pharaoh's palace. Here, we add the notion that the family would plan to return to Israel after the famine ended. Baalei Tosfot add that Pharaoh had given Goshen to our matriarch Sarah, thereby preventing the Egyptian people from complaining about this Egyptian land being given to Israelites. Thirdly, Goshen was uninhabited land, so nobody could complain that the land was taken from some Egyptians. Commentary abounds concerning the choice of Goshen. I think the most important aspect was that it gave the Israelites the ability to be alone, isolated from Egyptian society, enabling the Jews to practice their religion without requiring them to mix with Egyptians.

5. Yosef the viceroy gave each brother a change of clothing, more befitting the family of the viceroy of Egypt. But to Binyamin, his lone true, whole brother, Yosef gave five changes of clothing. (45:22). Why 5 times the gift that he made to the rest of the brothers? Yosef was testing the brothers. He wanted to see if the brothers would become jealous of their youngest, and more favored sibling. It seems that the brothers passed the test. The Torah does not describe any ill feelings over the favoritism given to the youngest brother. This was a good sign, one that Yosef had hoped for. Yosef could see the change in his brothers. He could forgive them, but he would never forget how mistreated and the pain he experienced at the hands of his siblings. The change was good, but Yosef was permanently scarred by the ordeal that he went through when he was a teenager in the Patriarchal home.

6. As the Jewish tribe moved in to Goshen, Egypt, they eventually were to become enslaved. Just as the Pesach Marror is supposed to taste sweet when we first bite into it and then become bitter as we continue to chew on it, so it was when the Jews entered Egypt. They were first treated royally, being the family of the viceroy, but as the years rolled by, their Egyptian experience turned bitter, as the slavery would fulfill Hashem's promise to Avraham. The slavery experience would create true unity among the Israelite people, no more family disunity, jealousy, or any internal conflict. Maybe that was the real reason why they were supposed to suffer in the fiery furnace of slavery. This unity was an important element in the development of the Jewish nation. This element of unity would enable them to respond as one man "We shall do and we shall obey, later at Mt. Sinai. (Shemot 24:7).

7. Before the Jews could move to Goshen, Yaakov dispatched Yehudah to prepare the new Jewish home. Rashi quotes the Midrash that Yaakov sent Yehudah to

establish a Yeshivah where Torah was to be taught. This was the second Yeshivah to be established. The first one was created by Shem and Eiver and existed in Eretz Yisrael. This one in Goshen was the first Yeshivah to be established outside of Eretz Yisrael, a sign of all future Exiles that we have endured in our long history. The Oz-naim LaTorah asks a good question: Why did Yaakov send Yehudah and not Levi, whose family will become the national teachers of Torah, or Yissachar who was privileged to have hundreds of Sanhedrin members from his tribe. The answer that the Oz-naim LaTorah poses is very apropos for us today. Yehudah, the future king of Israel, has to realize that religion should be intertwined with the secular part of government. There is no separation of "church and state" in Judaism.

8. MIDRASH. When Yehudah stated in his long plea for Binyamin's freedom, he said to the viceroy "you are like Pharaoh..." (44:18). The Midrash meant it literally. Just as the Pharaoh of old was smitten with leprosy when he detained Yehuda's great grandmother Sarah for one night from her husband, so, too, will this viceroy become leprous for detaining Binyamin from being with his father!

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT VAYIGASH 5786

I. From the Text

1. What did Yehudah offer the viceroy in order to free Binyamin? (44:33)
2. What was the viceroy's response to Yehudah's offer? (45:3)
3. How many years were left to the famine when Yosef revealed himself to his brothers? (45:6)
4. Where did Yosef propose to transplant his family in Egypt? (45:10)
5. The Egyptians ended up giving to Pharaoh their lands and property for food. Who were the only Egyptians who did not need to surrender their lands to Pharaoh? (47:26)

II. From Rashi

6. Why did Yehudah say to the viceroy that their brother had died? (44:20)
7. What did Yosef show his brothers, to prove his identity? (45:4)
8. What "sign" did Yosef give his brothers to prove to Yaakov that Yosef was still alive? (45:27)
9. What did Yaakov give Esav for Esav's portion in the Double Cave burial site? (46:6)
10. What blessing did Yaakov give Pharaoh when he left Pharaoh's presence? (47:10)

III. From the Rabbis

11. When Yaakov and Yosef were re-united, Rashi quotes the Midrash that Yosef did all the crying; Yaakov was reciting the Shema. Why wasn't Yaakov crying also? (Gur Aryeh)
12. What were the best years of Yaakov's life? (Hirsch)
13. Why was Pharaoh so anxious for Yosef's entire family to come to Egypt? (Rav Soloveitchik)

IV. Midrash

14. Why did Yosef cry when he saw Binyamin (besides seeing that the Holy Temples would be destroyed)?

V. Haftorah. Ezekiel

15. What names were written on the two pieces of wood that the prophet held?

VI. Relationships

16.
 - a) Yov - Yissachar
 - b) Peretz - Zerach
 - c) Kehat - Sered
 - d) Muppim - Chuppim
 - e) Ephraim - Orde

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT VAYIGASH 5786

1. Yehudah offered to enslave himself to the viceroy in exchange for Binyamin's freedom.
2. He was emotional and revealed himself as their lost brother Yosef.
3. There were 5 years left of famine to come.
4. In Goshen
5. The Egyptian priests
6. Because otherwise the viceroy would have insisted that the brothers produce him.
7. That he was circumcised.
8. Yosef told his brothers to tell Yaakov what Torah subject Yaakov and Yosef were learning when Yosef left his father: Eglah Arufah
9. All that Yaakov earned in Padan Aram.
10. That the waters of the Nile would rise up to greet Pharaoh when he approached the River.
11. In his moment of joy, Yaakov felt the need to thank Hashem.
12. The last 17 years of his life, with his entire family together, in Egypt.
13. Surely others in the family were equally smart as Yosef and could be pressed into national service.
14. Yosef saw that the Ten Tribes would be exiled and scattered.
15. Yehudah and (for Yosef) Ephraim
16.
 - a) Father Yissachar
 - b) Brothers
 - c) First Cousins
 - d) Brothers
 - e) First Cousins

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