

בס"ד

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DIVREI TORAH FROM
HARAV SHMUEL ZUCKER שליט"א

מרא דאתרא קדושה בית שלמה ודמת אשכול

ויחי

Turning Mitzrayim Back into Gan Eden

Living the Geulah While in Galus

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Vayechi

Turning Mitzrayim Back into Gan Eden

Parashas Vayechi, the last parashah of Sefer Bereishis, is a re-enactment of parashas Bereishis. In order to understand the powerful link between the beginning and end of Sefer Bereishis, it is necessary to address a few fundamental questions.

The final *pasuk* in the parashah teaches us that Yosef died and was placed in a coffin in Mitzrayim. How does this *pasuk* sum up the overall *avodah* of Sefer Bereishis?

Chazal say that Yosef was not buried in the ground but, rather, placed in the Nile River (Sotah 13a). In fact, the gematria of “נילוס” (Nile) is יוסף (see Ba’al Haturim). Why was Yosef placed in the Nile? What is the connection between Yosef and this river?

We will see that Parashas Vayechi is a *tikkun* of Parashas Bereishis. At

the beginning of Bereishis, the Torah tells the story of Adam HaRishon in Gan Eden, where the *nachash* incited Adam and Chavah to sin, and as a result, they were banished. Parashas Vayechi marks the *tikkun* of that sin. We will see that Pharaoh represents the *nachash*, Mitzrayim represents Gan Eden, Yaakov represents Adam HaRishon, and that the experience of Yaakov and his children was the *tikkun* of the experience of Adam in Gan Eden.

The Torah often asserts that Pharaoh represents the snake. In Sefer Yechezkel (29:3), for example, Pharaoh is compared to a serpent; and Shemos Rabbah states that just as a serpent is crooked, so too is Pharaoh.

Furthermore, there are a number of similarities between the behavior of Pharaoh and that of the snake. For example, in Parashas Bereishis, the snake told Adam that if he eats

from the Eitz Hada'as he will become like Hashem. Pharaoh similarly declares, "לִי יֵאָדָר וְאֵי עֲשִׂיתִנִּי" (ibid.), for he believed, explains the Radak, that he himself was the creator and, therefore, the maker of the river. It is for this reason as well that Pharaoh is said to have stood "עַל הַיָּאָדָר" – on the river," like a master upon his object of design, since he believed that he created it. An additional parallel is that just as the snake wanted to kill Adam and marry Chavah, so too did Pharaoh wish to kill Avraham and marry Sarah.

Moreover, the first sign that Hashem showed Pharaoh was the transformation of Aharon's staff into a snake, which suggests that Pharaoh was, first and foremost, a snake.

According to the Gemara, "before Adam sinned, the *nachash* was the most impressive creature" (Sanhedrin 39). The Maharsha explains this to mean that while all the animals were created to serve Adam, the snake was assigned a more elevated aspect of that role: to facilitate Adam's interaction with the world. In this regard, he was distinguished from all animals and could even speak; he thus communicated with Adam like a person. He even walked on two legs to further broaden his capacity

as Adam's personal assistant. In this sense, the snake is reminiscent of a staff, whose primary function is to facilitate a man's ability to walk and interact with the world. As a result of the snake's sin in Gan Eden, he lost his legs and became a crawling creature devoid of any relationship with man.

Thus, in the first encounter between Moshe, Aharon and Pharaoh, Aharon's transforming the staff into a *nachash* conveyed to Pharaoh that he was a snake, yet one with a choice as to what sort of snake he wished to be. He could be like this miraculous snake and facilitate Moshe Rabbeinu's way in the world in the form of a supportive, guiding staff – effectively rectifying the sin of the *nachash* – or he could stubbornly be just another snake, unmindful of his purpose in the world.

The snake and Pharaoh are two parts of a single entity. While at the beginning of Bereishis this entity is called the *nachash*, at the end of Bereishis it is called Pharaoh.

The Torah states that the river flowing out of Gan Eden divides into four, the first of which is the Pishon River. Rashi (Bereishis 2:10-11) explains that this refers to the Nile, indicating that

Mitzrayim was watered directly from Gan Eden. And further indication of the link between Egypt and Gan Eden is seen in the *pasuk*'s depiction of the lush Jordan plain: “כֵּן ה' בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם” (Bereishis 13:10).

Now, let us turn to the connection between Yaakov Avinu and Adam HaRishon in Gan Eden. To understand this connection, we must first clarify Adam HaRishon's mission in this world.

On his first day, Adam HaRishon was tasked with the *avodah* of “לַעֲבֹדָה וְלִשְׁמֹרָה” (Bereishis 2:15). Chazal explain that the word לַעֲבֹדָה refers to the positive fulfilment of mitzvos, namely, the *avodah* of עֲשֵׂה טוֹב – pursuing and performing what is good. In contrast, the word “לִשְׁמֹרָה” refers to refraining from *aveiros*, namely, the *avodah* of סוּר מֵרָע – shunning what is bad. Two trees in Gan Eden facilitated these *avodos*: the עֵץ הָדָעַת, representing מֵרָע, and the עֵץ הַחַיִּים, representing טוֹב.

The commentaries explain that the Eitz Hada'as leads a person to succumb to his evil inclinations, and Adam's mission was to restrain himself from partaking of its fruits and following his bodily desires. However, the *nachash* sought to entice

Adam to eat from the Eitz Hada'as and, consequently, introduce him to physical תאוה. Yet Adam's twofold mission was to actively pursue what is good and partake of the fruits of the Eitz Hachaim whilst simultaneously abstaining from the fruits of the Eitz Hada'as. This is precisely the *avodah* of עֲשֵׂה טוֹב and סוּר מֵרָע.

In eating from the Eitz Hada'as, Adam failed in the *avodah* of סוּר מֵרָע, and consequently, he and Chavah were punished with four measures: difficulty in childbirth, infertility of the soil, the need to labor for sustenance, and mortality (“כִּי עֹפֵר אֶתֶּה” [ibid. 3:19]).

The consequences of Adam's sin unfolds in the beginning of Sefer Bereishis, while the *tikkun* of that sin through Yaakov and his family develops at the end of Sefer Bereishis. The עֲשֵׂה טוֹב and סוּר מֵרָע elements attained a state of *shleimus* through Yaakov and his children, allowing mankind to re-enter Gan Eden. How did this rectification occur?

Mitzrayim was the land of תאוה and, as such, is referred to as the “עִדֵּת הָאֶרֶץ,” the epicenter of תאוה רעות. Yechezkel HaNavi discusses at length the pervasive immorality of

Mitzrayim, and it is here that Yosef is tasked with fulfilling his mission of סוד מרע. The mitzvah that classically represents the *avodah* of סוד מרע is *bris milah*, for the removal of the *orlah* is an act of סוד מרע. Severing the *orlah* is a removal of “רע.”

Throughout Torah, the *orlah* represents the force of physicality, and Yosef’s central *avodah* was the opposing force of *tikkun habris*. It was specifically he, therefore, who was tasked with entering Egypt and rectifying Adam’s failure in the *avodah* of סוד מרע, toward the ultimate end of returning Mitzrayim to its original state of Gan Eden. This is why Yosef instructed the Egyptians to undergo *bris milah*, which symbolizes the *avodah* of סוד מרע.

When Yosef was sold into slavery, he was initially bought by ישמעאלים transporting *besamim* (fragrant spices), which Rashi explains to have been a special kindness from Hashem. Yet what is these *besamim*’s deeper significance?

The closing words of Shir HaShirim are “על דודי בשמים,” which the Midrash Rabbah explains are in reference to Gan Eden, a lofty place of elegant *besamim*. At the outset of his journey

to Mitzrayim, Yosef was provided a hint of the sacred task with which he had been entrusted: he would transform Egypt back into Gan Eden, where *besamim* flourish. And this focus, this keen sense of mission was indeed a special kindness from Hashem.

Yosef’s *nisayon* with Potiphar’s wife was, in fact, identical to Adam HaRishon’s *nisayon* with the Eitz Hada’as. The Midrash states that when Yosef refused to sin with his master’s wife, he told her, “I’m afraid! If Adam HaRishon was cast out of Gan Eden for transgressing the simple mitzvah he was commanded, how much greater [would be the consequences of] this far more severe sin of *gilui arayos*?!” (Bereishis Rabbah 87:5).

This exchange seems odd. Why would Yosef share the history of Adam’s failure in Gan Eden with Potifar’s wife? Why compare Adam’s ordeal with his own? What is the connection between Yosef’s *nisayon* now and Adam’s *nisayon* in Gan Eden?

In light of the ideas shared above, Yosef was telling her that the very purpose of him being in Mitzrayim was to rectify the *avodah* of סוד מרע,

where Adam had failed, and that in avoiding sin with her, he would successfully elevate Mitzrayim to its original state of Gan Eden.

While battling his yetzer hara, Yosef perceived the image of Yaakov. How did the vision of his father prevent him from sinning? What is the connection between Yaakov's image and avoidance of sin?

The Gemara in Bava Metzia says that Yaakov Avinu resembled Adam HaRishon prior to the sin. As such, when he envisioned his father, Yosef was actually seeing Adam HaRishon, which reminded him of his mission to rectify Adam's sin by succeeding in the *avodah* of סוד מרע and overcoming his temptation.

Having escaped temptation and avoiding sin, Yosef began the process of returning Mitzrayim to the state of Gan Eden.

Following the sin in Gan Eden, Hashem made clothing for Adam and Chavah. Because they introduced תאוה into their lives, Adam and Chavah now needed to cover their bodies. In contrast, Yosef passed the *nisayon* and overcame תאוה and, therefore, no longer needed clothes. This is why

when he resisted Potiphar's wife, she grabbed his clothing and he fled without them. Now free of תאוה, he was free of the need for clothes.

It is noteworthy that three out of Adam's four punishments were rectified by Yosef. For Adam, the soil would no longer produce. In Mitzrayim, too, nothing grew during the years of famine. In rectifying Adam's sin, however, Yosef became the provider of an abundance of food.

Also, Adam was punished with having to toil for sustenance, yet Rashi comments that when Yaakov and his sons came down to Mitzrayim, Yosef provided them with everything they needed without them having to work, thereby effecting a return to the original state of Gan Eden.

Additionally, Chavah was cursed with difficult childbirth, yet Parashas Vayigash ends with the words "וַיִּפְרוּ וַיִּרְבוּ מְאֹד." The Yidden now bred in Mitzrayim effortlessly and in vast numbers.

Only the curse of mortality remained. "כִּי עַפְרָא אֶתְּחַבֵּי וְאֵל עַפְרָא תִּשְׁבֵּי." Yet Parashas Vayeichi removes even this final punishment. The very name יִדְי means "and he lived," alluding to

the עץ החיים, the “Tree of Life” in Gan Eden. Having rectified the sin of eating from the Eitz Hada’as, Yaakov and his sons could now partake of the Eitz Hachaim, and the Gemara indeed states: יעקב אבינו לא מת (Ta’anis 5b).

This is ultimately symbolized as well in Yosef being not buried but, rather, placed in a casket and submerged in the Nile, which as earlier discussed, serves as Mitzrayim’s connection to Gan Eden. In death, Yosef therefore returns not to dust, but to Gan Eden.

Yosef’s successful completion of the *avodah* of סוד מרע is the *tikkun* of the Eitz Hada’as, and this enabled the Eitz Hachaim to be established in Egypt, paving the way for Yehudah to institute a *beis midrash*, an embodiment of the Eitz Hachaim, down in Egypt. What is the significance of Yehudah’s bringing Torah to Mitzrayim?

The sefarim teach that just before Moshiach comes, Yosef’s descendants will be defeat those of Eisav. Eisav represents the *kelipah* of the *nachash*, which caused Adam to fail in his *avodah* of סוד מרע.

Initially, however, Eisav was entrusted

with a very special mission. When born, the twin sons of Yaakov were assigned crucial spiritual tasks: Eisav’s *avodah* was סוד מרע, while Yaakov’s was עשה טוב. Yet Eisav failed, clinging to the רע rather than distancing himself from it and causing Yaakov to assume responsibility for both עשה טוב and סוד מרע. Eventually, Eisav’s forsaken *avodah* was handed to Yosef, who excelled in סוד מרע while in Mitzrayim, resisting all the temptations of the *yetzer hara*.

This is the *avodah* of Moshiach ben Yosef in our generation, in these final moments of Galus Edom. Our task is to stay clear of the רע, even as Eisav and the *nachash* now launch a final, desperate campaign to spread the רע everywhere and assault each and every one of us from all sides. In this sense, our sacred *avodah* parallels Yosef’s סוד מרע in Mitzrayim.

Yet when Moshiach comes and מלכות דוד בית דוד will be restored, the *avodah* will shift to עשה טוב, and just as Yehudah brought Torah to Egypt, Moshiach ben Dovid, Yehudah’s descendent, will establish עשה טוב as our center and lead us in the pursuit and performance of good for all time – soon, in our days. Amen!





Vayechi

Living the Geulah While in Galus

Parashas Vayechi is called a “פרשה סתומה,” because there’s no empty space between Vayigash and Vayechi. Rashi brings two explanations for this. The first is that Yaakov Avinu passed away in this parashah, and that is when the *galus* began to be felt. The second reason is that Yaakov wanted to reveal the *ketz*, the time when Mashiach will come, and Hashem hid it from him.

We therefore have two explanations for why the parashah is closed. One is because the *galus* was about to begin, and the other is because Yaakov Avinu was ready to reveal the final end of the *galus*. The question is, why was Yaakov jumping to the *geulah* before the *galus* had even begun?

The answer is that Yaakov Avinu never experienced *galus*. Yaakov’s *madreigah* was that even when he was in *galus*, he felt the *geulah*. In the previous parashah, when Yaakov

was afraid to go down to Mitzrayim, Hashem said to him, “אנכי ארד עמך,” מצרימה ואנכי אעלה גם עליה. The mefarshim associate this אנכי with the אנכי of Maamad Har Sinai (See, e.g., Sefas Emes, Vayigash, תרנ”ו). Har Sinai was in fact the climax of our redemption from Mitzrayim. Hashem was telling Yaakov that even as he was going down into *galus*, he would go down with the highest level of redemption. Yaakov didn’t experience *galus*. Even in *galus* he was living with the highest spiritual experience, the experience of Matan Torah.

We see a direct parallel to this in Parashas Vayeitzei. When Yaakov left Eretz Yisrael to go into *galus* and live with Lavan, the *pasuk* says, “וַיַּפֶּגַע בַּמָּקוֹם.” (Bereishis 28:11) Rashi (Bereishis 28:17) explains that Har Hamoriah lifted itself up and came to Yaakov Avinu. This is the same concept. Just as he went down to *galus* Mitzrayim with Har Sinai, he went down to *galus* Lavan with Har



Hamoriah.

The Arizal tells us that Rabbi Akiva was a *nitzotz* of the *neshamah* of Yaakov Avinu. “עקב” and “עקיבא” have the same letters (See Arizal, Likkutei Torah, Parashas Vayechi). Therefore, we find this concept of not experiencing exile with regard to Rabbi Akiva as well. When he saw a fox coming out from the place where the Kodesh Hakodashim had been, he laughed. He didn’t experience the Churban; rather, he saw the Churban as a foundation for the third and ultimate Beis Hamikdash, because he saw only redemption.

The Arizal also says that Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, the compiler of the Mishnah, was a *nitzotz* of the *neshamah* of Yaakov Avinu (Sefer Kehillas Yaakov). In fact, the word “נשיא” is an acronym for “נשמתו של יעקב אבינו.” Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, as well, did not experience the Churban. He lived at the time of the Roman exile, yet the Roman Emperor, Antoninus, humbled himself before him and treated him like a king. Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, who had the allegiance of the leader overseeing the exile, certainly did not experience exile himself. This is all rooted in the *madreigah* of Yaakov — the ability to live in exile

but be connected to the ultimate state of *geulah*.

This idea is expressed in the *pasuk* of Shema Yisrael, as well. Rashi explains that this *pasuk* refers to the state of *galus* and the state of *geulah* at the same time. “Hashem Elokeinu” refers to this world, when Hashem is only our God due to *goyim*’s denial of Him. “Hashem Echad” refers to the future world, when everyone will accept Hashem. The hidden meaning of this *pasuk* of Shema is to be able to live physically in *galus* and yet connect to *geulah* at the same time. Therefore, we find a strong connection between Yaakov, Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, Rabbi Akiva, and the *pasuk* of Shema Yisrael. Yaakov Avinu recited this *pasuk* when he came down to Mitzrayim (Rashi, Bereishis 46:29), Rabbi Akiva died while reciting this *pasuk* (Berachos 61b) and Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi begins the Mishnayos with the mitzvah of reciting Shema.

Why does Torah She’baal Peh begin with the mitzvah of *k’rias Shema*? Because Torah She’baal Peh itself is the light of Torah that emerges from within the darkness of exile. Therefore, it begins with the mitzvah of Shema Yisrael, expressing that a Jew has the ability, even in *galus*, to

be connected to the highest levels of *geulah*.

In fact, Shema, which is the recitation of Torah She'bichsav, may be recited by heart, even though one is generally not allowed to recite Torah She'bichsav by heart (Berachos 15a). Shema is an exception because we are so fluent in Shema, it is as if we are reading from a text. But there is also a hidden *remez* here in that Shema has the characteristics of Torah She'baal Peh. Just as Torah She'baal Peh reveals the light of *geulah* within the *galus*, as explained, so, too, is the *pasuk* of Shema Yisrael split between *galus* and *geulah*, revealing *geulah* within the *galus*, as explained above. It is also for this reason that all of Torah She'baal Peh follows the opinion of Rabbi Akiva (Sanhedrin 86a), because he is the one who lived his life in exile with the light of the *geulah*.

We can now understand the Gemara stating that the Jews accepted Torah She'baal Peh after their salvation in the story of Purim (Shabbos 88a). At that point, Esther was our queen, and Mordechai, adorned in princely clothes, held high rank in the palace. This is not exactly the model of *galus*! In fact, Chazal have to remind us that “אכתי עבדי אחשדוש אן” — we

were, in fact, still technically under Achashveirosh's rule (the word “אכתי” indicates that we need to be reminded that we were still in *galus*) (Megillah 14a). We were in a place of exile that did not feel like exile. The time was therefore ripe for accepting Torah She'baal Peh, which is exactly what happened.

This is the meaning of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi's choice to begin Torah She'baal Peh with the question: “When do we read *k'rias Shema* in the evening?” namely, “How can we connect to ‘*Hashem echad*’ even in the nighttime of *galus*?” The Mishnah continues, “From the time that Kohanim can eat their *terumah*.” The Gemara asks, “When do the Kohanim eat *terumah*? From the time of *tzeis ha'kochavim*. [If so,] let the Mishnah say [straight away], ‘From the time of *tzeis ha'kochavim*!’”

Bearing in mind our discussion, however, we can understand clearly why the *avodah* of the Kohanim would be used to pinpoint the time of *k'rias Shema* at night. Kohanim and all their corresponding halachos are applicable during a time when the Beis Hamikdash is built, a time of *geulah*. It is precisely the concept of Shema Yisrael at night — to be living

even now in the night of *galus* with the laws that pertained to Kohanim when the Beis Hamikdash was standing.

The main theme here is Yaakov's deep connection to Torah She'baal Peh. For this reason, this parashah has eighty-five *pesukim*, which is the gematria of the word "פר" — a reference to Torah She'baal Peh, which Yaakov revealed. Chazal say, "אין כל הגליות דללו מתבנסות"

אלא בזכות משניות." (Vayikra Rabbah 7:3) Mishnayos is the light of *geulah* that is revealed from within the darkness of *galus*. By toiling in Torah She'baal Peh, we can experience the *geulah* even while in exile. In that *zechus*, the great light of Torah She'baal Peh should push away the darkness of exile and lead us into the *geulah sheleimah*, speedily, in our days. Amen!





בב"ד

PARSHAS VAYECHI

שבת פרשת ויחי

CANDLE LIGHTING	4:12	הדלקת נרות
MINCHA/KABBALAS SHABBOS	4:32	מנחה/קבלת שבת
SFAS EMES SHIUR WITH THE RAV	8:15	שיעור שפת אמת עם הרב שליט"א
SHACHARIS	8:30 (8:45 דה"ר)	שחרית
SOF ZMAN K"S (G"RA) (Please say before davening)	9:11	סוף זמן ק"ש

KIDDUSH - קידוש

Sponsored by R' Menashe Sitzer and mishpacha in honor of the recent birth of their baby girl!

HILCHOS SHABBOS SHIUR FROM R' ELIYAHU YAARI (EZRAS NASHIM)	3:30	שיעור הלכות שבת עם ר' אליהו יערי (בעודת נשים)
MINCHA	4:07	מנחה

SHALOSH SEUDOS

MAARIV (R"Y)	6:04	מעריב וצאת דר"ת
AVOS U'BANIM	6:30	אבות ובנים

הרב שליט"א ידרוש בין קבלת שבת למעריב ובקידוש

MAZEL TOV!

The Rav and Rebbeztin on the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson Aharon, son of R' Yisroel Mordechai Shternbuch and mishpacha!
Aharon and the mishpacha will be shul on Leil Shabbos to wish a Mazel Tov!

R' Tzvi Herskowitz and mishpacha on the birth of twin grandchildren (boy and girl) to R' Avi and mishpacha!

