

Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim Vayigash 5773

(From the archives)

Shabbos in the Parasha

In this week's parashah it is said (Bereishis 47:8-9) *vayomer Pharaoh el Yaakov kamah yemei shenei chayecho vayomer Yaakov el Pharaoh yemei shenei migurei sheloshim umeas shanah miat viraim hayu yemei shenei chayai vilo hisigu es yemei shenei chayei avosai bimei migureihem*, Pharaoh said to Yaakov, "How many are the days of the years of your life?" Yaakov answered Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojourns have been a hundred and thirty years. Few and bad have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not reached the life spans of my forefathers in the days of their sojourns. The dialogue here is troubling, as it is difficult to understand why Yaakov would complain to Pharaoh about his hard life. The Medrash (see Daas Zekanim MiBaalei HaTosafos and Chizkuni to Bereishis 47:8) states that Yaakov was punished for his complaint, and he forfeited thirty-years of his life. Yet, the Heilegeh Ishbitzer writes in Parashas Mikeitz that the only words that Yaakov ever uttered in vain were when he said to his sons (Bereishis 43:6) *lamah hareioseem li lihagid laish hayeish lachem av oh ach*, "why did you treat me so ill by telling the man that you had another brother?" Other than these words, every word Yaakov uttered had profound meaning. What was Yaakov

implying in his apparent complaint to Pharaoh? To answer this question, we must understand why it was necessary for Yaakov and his sons to descend to Egypt. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh writes (Bereishis 46:3) that HaShem deemed it necessary for the Jewish People to descend to Egypt so that they would bring out the Holy Sparks that existed in Egypt. Essentially, writes the Ohr HaChaim, this is the function of all the exiles. Thus, we can now understand Yaakov's complaint to Pharaoh. Yaakov was intimating that he had yet to fulfill the purpose of the exiles, as the majority of his years were few and bad, i.e. unfulfilled regarding the redemption. The Gemara (Pesachim 56a) states that Yaakov desired to reveal the end of days to his children, but HaShem prevented him from doing so. It is evident that Yaakov's ambition in life was to witness the Ultimate Redemption or at least to make his children aware of the time when the Ultimate Redemption would occur. When Yaakov arrived in Egypt, he knew that the exile would soon commence. Thus, Yaakov informed Pharaoh that as long as the Ultimate Redemption had not arrived, his days were few and bad. We may not always be aware of the circumstances in our daily lives, but it is incumbent upon us to realize that we are in exile. Shabbos, writes the Shem MiShmuel, is a form of redemption. In the Kabbalas Shabbos

prayers that we recite Friday night, we invoke the passionate supplication of *karvah el nafshi gealah*, draw near to my soul-redeem it! We beseech HaShem to redeem us from our long and bitter exile. Although we are at times led to believe that we have everything we need, our souls are aware that we are still in mourning for the Bais HaMikdash, the lack of the Divine Presence in our midst, and all good that we truly seek. Yaakov, who reflects Shabbos, understood that exile is exile. Despite the fact that the Baal HaTurim (Bereishis 47:28) writes that Yaakov's best years were the seventeen years that he dwelled in Egypt, they were still years of exile. HaShem should give us the strength to observe His Holy Shabbos properly and faithfully, and then He will surely bring us the Ultimate Redemption, with the arrival of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, speedily, in our days.

Shabbos in the Zemiros

Eishes Chayil

Composed by Shlomo HaMelech in Mishlei

בְּטַח בָּהּ לֵב בְּעֵלָהּ, her husband's heart relies on her.

The word for husband in Hebrew is בְּעָל. Yet, we find that there was an idol that was referred to in Scripture as בְּעָל. What is the association between a husband and this idol? The Gemara (Shabbos 118b) tells us that if one observes the Shabbos correctly, even if he has worshipped idols like the generation of Enosh, he will be forgiven. This statement is truly

incredible. One can worship idols during the week and then arrive on Shabbos, recite Kiddush, eat a hearty meal, sleep well, and he gains atonement for even one of the worst sins that a Jew could possibly commit, which is idolatry. Perhaps this is the meaning of the verse where it is said that her husband's heart relies on her. The Shabbos is the bride, who waits every week for the husband, i.e. the Jewish People, to return to her. Similarly, although a Jew may have strayed during the week, to the point where he even worshipped idols, he still can rely on Shabbos to allow him to return. We have mentioned numerous times that the word Shabbos is derived from the word shav, which means to return. Let us use the Shabbos to gain atonement for our sins, and then we, the husband, will be reunited with our beloved bride, which is Shabbos.

Shabbos in Tefillah

HaShem and His praises are infinite

Tisbareich moshieinu al kol shevach maasei yadecho vial miorei ohr sheyatzarta heimah yifaarucha selah, may You be blessed, our Savior, beyond all the praises of Your handiwork and beyond the brilliant luminaries that You have formed – may they glorify You – selah. This passage is difficult to understand. Why do we declare that HaShem should be blessed beyond all praises? We know that the word *baruch* really does not mean blessed. Rather, *baruch* means that HaShem is the Source of all blessings. This being the case, how can we say that HaShem should be the Source of all blessings beyond our

praises? It would seem that our praises and HaShem being the Source of all blessings are mutually exclusive. Perhaps the solution to this enigma is that it is easy for one to think that by praising HaShem one has discharged his obligation of praising HaShem. The passage here thus demonstrates that contrary to this supposition, HaShem is the Source of all blessings, and just like HaShem is infinite, praising HaShem is also infinite. Thus, in reality one can never praise HaShem enough, and one has to be aware of this limitation.

Shabbos Stories

Her Husband Truly Trusted Her

Of the countless Jewish women who have immersed themselves in Torah, Bruriah is the most famous. She lived during the wisdom-rich Talmudic era, surrounded by the influences of her father- the great sage Rabbi Chanina ben Tradion, and by her husband-the great sage Rabbi Meir. Torah was her first love and its words guided every facet of her life. The following true story is frightening and deeply moving. Bruriah stretched her arms and raised her head from the Torah portion she was studying. As usual on Shabbos afternoons, her husband Rabbi Meir was at the study hall giving his regular lesson, and their two sons were up in their room challenging each other with a knotty Talmudic problem. Bruriah smiled as she listened to her children. She was glad to see her sons' love of Torah and passion for truth, which had

been kindled early on by their parents. She thought back to the previous evening and her husband and children singing "A Woman of Valor" as they did every Friday night. The same verses always made her stop and think: "Her husband's heart trusts in her... She opens her mouth with wisdom, and a lesson of kindness is on her tongue. Her sons arise and laud her, and her husband praises her." (Mishlei 31) She often asked herself how well she embodied these words. Surely she had occasionally opened her mouth with wisdom, but had she done so with kindness and compassion? And could her husband truly put his trust in her? Did she think solely of his welfare in his time of need? Was she truly "a woman of valor," worthy of her family's praise? Bruriah shivered and returned to her reading. Yet something was wrong. The letters blurred before her eyes and refused to make sense. Lifting her head from the book, she noticed that her sons had suddenly become still. That stillness was more disturbing than any noise could have been. She jumped up and ran to the stairs. The silence pressed in upon her and she could barely breathe. Pulling herself up by the railing, she burst into the upper room. There, she saw her sons still at the table, still clutching their books, their heads dropped lifelessly before them. As she stood in shock, the years seemed to fall away. She was [in flashback], once again a young girl, watching the flames leap before her eyes... Standing near the pit, she could see the kindling quickly catching fire,

and there, in the center of the blaze... "Father! Father!" she cried. "What are they doing to you?" She screamed in horror, but her voice was swallowed up by the roar of the Roman crowds surging forward to view the execution. The firewood crackled and tongues of flame licked at her father's flesh. Bruriah could feel the heat singeing her hair. She gazed at her father's tortured face. Just a few hours earlier, he had been teaching his disciples from the precious Torah scroll he always kept at his side. It was one of the few that the Romans had not yet confiscated. But suddenly the soldiers had rushed in and seized him, calling the public to witness another execution. In death as in life, Rabbi Chanina ben Tradion was not parted from his beloved Torah, for they had wrapped the scroll around his body. The parchment rapidly caught flame, but his own end was not as quick. To prolong his agony, the executioner had placed wet cloths over his heart. Bruriah gasped for air. "Father!" she cried. "How can I see you like this? Is this the reward for a life of Torah?" Out of the flames, Rabbi Chanina managed to reply: "If I were being burned alone, it would be difficult for me to bear. But now that I am being burned together with the Torah, I am confident that the One Who avenges the disgrace of the Torah will avenge my disgrace as well." Suddenly a great, thunderous roar was heard overhead. Rabbi Chanina's eyes grew wide, yet even as his disciples craned their necks skyward, they saw nothing. "Rabbi! What do you see?" they asked. "I see

only the parchment consumed; the letters fly up into the air! The flesh is scorched, but the spirit returns home..." Slowly the flames began to recede, and there before Bruriah were her sons, slumped over their books. The same words resounded in her mind: "Is this the reward for a life of Torah?" But the same comfort mingled with her grief. In death as in life, they were not parted from the holy Torah. They had been learning up to the very last moment, and had died amid their books. Their souls had accomplished their mission in this world and had now returned home with all the holiness they had gleaned here. "How foolish we are to rejoice over birth and weep over death," she remembered learning. "When a child is born, we should weep over the perilous voyage ahead of him. What dangers lurk out there? Will he ever reach safe shores? But when a person dies after a life of righteousness, it is cause for joy. He has ventured down to the depths and escaped with precious spoils." Bruriah knew that she could only grieve for herself, not for her sons, for they had successfully completed their journey. She gathered up her eldest son and cradled his body in her arms. Gently, she laid him on the bed. Then she lifted up her younger son and placed him beside his brother. She gave each one a parting kiss and spread a sheet over them, securely tucking in the covers as she had so often done on cold, windy nights. Passing by their table, she closed their books. "The letters fly up," she reminded herself. "Only the parchment is consumed..." Stars were

already making their way across the horizon. The Shabbos had ended, and Bruriah knew her husband would be home shortly. Her eyes burned with the sting of unshed tears, but this was not the time to let them flow. Rabbi Meir took his coat off slowly as he entered the room. "Where are the boys?" he asked, looking around. "They have gone to study," replied Bruriah. "But I just came from the study hall and did not see them." Bruriah responded by handing him a cup of Havdalah wine. Yet the service did not distract Rabbi Meir from his unanswered question. "Where are the boys?" he repeated. Bruriah seemed unconcerned.

"They went somewhere. They may be back any moment," she said as she poured him a bowl of hot soup. When he had finished, Bruriah sat beside him. "Before the Shabbos, a man left some valuables in my trust," she said. "He asked me to guard them until he returned. He has now come back and asked for his belongings. Must I return them?" Rabbi Meir stared at her in astonishment. This was not the kind of question he expected to hear from his scholarly wife. "My dear," he replied at once, "when one guards a deposit, [of course he is] obliged to return it to its rightful owner!" Bruriah nodded silently and led her husband upstairs. She brought him near the bed and lifted the sheet. There lay their two sons, without a breath of life. "My sons! My sons!" Rabbi Meir cried out. Falling into a chair, he sobbed until it seemed his frail body would burst. "My teachers! My

teachers!" he wept. "You were my sons in the eyes of the world, but in my eyes you were also my teachers, enlightening me with your Torah!" "Rabbi," Bruriah whispered, "did you not say that we are obliged to return valuables whenever the rightful owner claims them? Our children were never our own possessions. They were only left with us for safekeeping. G-d gave them, and now G-d has taken them back." Rabbi Meir's sobs began to subside. He looked over at his wife and understood that they had been chosen as the guardians of two precious souls during their short stay on earth. And he knew that they had been proper caretakers, for not only had their sons departed without blemish, they had even attained their unique portions of truth. Surely their souls had returned with the fire of Torah burning brightly within them. Bruriah had comforted her husband. She had not indulged in her own sorrow until she had prepared him for his loss. In her great wisdom, she had helped him let go of the precious sons who were no longer in his possession. Rabbi Meir knew that he could always trust in Bruriah. In his grief, he praised her. And he was certain that in the world of truth, their sons were rising up to laud her as well.

Shabbos in Navi

Shmuel I Chapter 19

Maintaining Shabbos during the week

In this chapter we learn how Yonasan convinced his father Shaul to spare Dovid's life and Shaul agreed. Later on, however, a spirit of melancholy befell Shaul and he sought to kill Dovid, so Dovid had to flee. When Shaul discovered that Dovid was with Shmuel, Shaul sent messengers to have Dovid killed. The messengers arrived and they saw Shmuel prophesying and they began to prophesize. This happened with all the messengers that Shaul sent and eventually Shaul himself arrived and he began to prophesize. This incident bears a profound lesson for us. We can spend the entire week engaged in matters that are not necessarily spiritual and then the Holy Shabbos arrives. One would think that after experiencing the holiness and purity of Shabbos one would find it extremely difficult to go back into the week as if nothing had occurred. Unfortunately even after Shaul experienced this stage of prophecy he continued in his pursuit of Dovid. Let us hope that HaShem will allow us to taste the beauty of Shabbos and to take that exalted spiritual level with us into the weekday.

Shabbos in Agadah

Shabbos is a day of remembrance

The Gemara states that prior to the birth of a child, an angel strikes the child on his lip and the child forgets all the Torah that he studied with the angel while inside his mother. The Pinei Menachem writes that the custom is to have a Shalom zachor on the Shabbos that

occurs after the birth of a male child, as it is akin to comforting the mourners. A child who knew all of the Torah and then forgot it requires consolation. The Pinei Menachem wonders why this is done on Shabbos and not immediately after birth or at the bris, and furthermore, Shabbos is not a time of mourning. The Pinei Menachem answers that Shabbos is the world of remembrance, and that is when the child can have a connection to what he learned prior to his birth. This idea is similar to what is brought in Sefarim that one who rectifies himself in this world can attain the knowledge of Torah that he studied prior to birth. This can occur specifically on Shabbos which is referred to as a day of the souls.

Shabbos in Halacha

Returning in a Different Pot

One is also allowed to pour boiled water from the kettle into a cup and then pour from the cup into the pot of cholent. In these situations, one is returning hot water from the kettle to the blech in a different pot, i.e. the cholent pot. Theoretically, one could add hot water from an urn to the cholent. Nonetheless, since water in an urn does not usually reach the boiling point (212°), the water cannot be 'returned' to a pot where it might become boiled, as this would be a violation of cooking.

Shabbos Challenge Question

Shabbos Challenge Question

Last week we posed the question: every week we recite Kabbalas Shabbos as we greet the Shabbos. What is the idea of greeting the Shabbos, which we do not find by any other commandments and we do not greet the festivals?

A basic answer to this question is that while we are certainly enjoined to anticipate other mitzvos, it is specifically regarding Shabbos that the Torah mentions the idea of preparation (See Shemos 16:5). Furthermore, with regard to the World to Come, the Gemara (Avodah Zara 3a) uses the metaphor that one who does not prepare on Erev Shabbos will not eat on Shabbos. Thus, we see clearly that an important component of the Holy Shabbos is in the preparation. Included in that preparation is that we, in a sense, are ecstatic about our having prepared for Shabbos and now we can reap the rewards of the preparations by going out and greeting the Shabbos.

This week's question is what is the significance of eating fish on Shabbos? If you have a possible answer, please email me at ShabbosTaamHachaim@gmail.com and your answer will be posted in next week's edition of Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim.

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Is sponsored in memory of:

Ezra Hasofer and Nechemiah

Rav Ezra of Gerona (1227), the Ramban's teacher in Kabbalah. He himself learned Kabbalah from Rav Yitzchak Sagi Nahor, son of the Ravad III.

Rabbeinu Yosef, son of Shmuel Hanaggid, and son-in-law of Rav Nissim Gaon of Kirouan was murdered in an Arab pogrom with another 1500 Jews in Spain (1067).

Rav Yehoshua Basis (1860). Chacham and Chief Rabbi of Tunisia for many years.

Rav Yehuda ("Reb Yiddel") Weber (1920-2006). Born in Vodkert, Hungary to Rav Yissachar Weber, a descendent of the Bach, and of Rebbetzin Chana, a niece of the Arugas HaBosem. After his Bar Mitzvah, Yehuda was sent to learn in Pupa under Rav Yaakov Yechezkel Grunwald, the Vayaged Yaakov, the Pupa Rebbe, who was his rebbi muvhak for 7 years. Rav Yehuda then served as mashgiach of Pupa. When the yeshiva was closed in 1944, Rav Yehuda spent 6 months in the local work camps before being deported to Bergen Belsen. In 1946, his sister introduced him to his Rebbetzin, Batsheva. A year later, his sister, Miriam, married the Pupa Rebbe. Both families settled in Antwerp, then moved to Williamsburg, in New York, in

1950. In 1952, he was appointed Rosh Yeshiva of the newly established Pupa Yeshiva, first located in Queens, then in Ossining, in Westchester County. Although his family stayed in Williamsburg, Reb Yiddel made the 40-mile drive for four decades.

Daf Yomi Schedule at Maor Torah Center

Monday-Friday 6:00 AM followed by Shacharis at 6:55 AM.

Sunday 8:00 AM followed by Shacharis at 9:00 AM

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