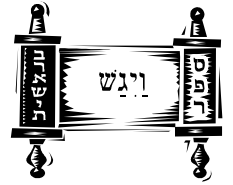




KINDER TORAH®

For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table
Parshas Vayigash



Forgive

"He (Yosef) kissed all of his brothers and wept upon them" (Bereshis 45:15). The Shlah HaKodesh comments, "See how much a person needs to forgive and let things pass. They sinned against Yosef, and Yosef cried and kissed them." The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 241 - "do not take revenge", and Mitzvah 242 - "do not bear a grudge") explains as follows. When one person wrongs another, the way of the world is to look for an opportunity to get back at the other person. The Torah comes along and says, "Do not take revenge. Do not bear a grudge." (Vayikra 19:18). How can one accomplish this? By realizing that everything that happens to us, good or bad, is from Hashem. Nothing can happen against His will. Yosef himself tells the brothers this, "It was not you who sent me here, but Hashem." (Bereshis 45:8).

Kinderlach . . .

"Chani still has not returned the book that she borrowed from me. She only wanted it for a day, and that was five days ago. The next time that she wants something, she can go borrow it from someone else." Kinderlach, we have to try very hard to judge Chani favorably. She probably forgot about the book. Hashem is sending us this test. We need to learn to forgive and not take revenge. This is a very valuable lesson to learn and now is the time to learn it. If we learn to judge people favorably and forgive them, we will save ourselves so much tzorus (distress) and aggravation later in life. Learning to forgive is learning how to live.

Define Yourself

"And it will be when Paroh summons you and says, 'What is your occupation?'" (Bereshis 46:33). Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch zt"l points out that in a country such as Egypt a person is defined by his work. A person is not born as a person, rather as a worker, farmer, soldier, etc. In such a place, we understand that the first question that Paroh would ask the person is about his occupation.

That is the most important thing in the world about that person.

What is most important to us? "He sent Yehuda ahead to Yosef to prepare ahead in Goshen" (Bereshis 46:28). What did Yehuda prepare? Rashi explains that Yehuda went ahead to set up a Beis HaMedrash. The Shlah HaKodesh learns an important principle from this. The foremost consideration in a person's mind must always be his spiritual needs. When he builds a new home, he should first plan to build a room where he can learn and pray. Then he can finish planning the rest of the house.

What is our attitude about a person's work? The Chofetz Chaim zt"l relates a parable based on the verse, "Yosef sustained his father and his brothers and all of his father's household with food . . ." (Bereshis 47:12). A king once went to visit his soldiers and appease them. He sent word ahead that anyone who had a request should come forward and ask the king. One soldier approached the king and requested with a complete heart that the king should supply him with his meals every day. The soldier's friends laughed at him. You are asking for something that you already have. The king has already promised to feed all of the soldiers in the army. So too it is with us, continues the Chofetz Chaim zt"l. Hashem has already told us that he will feed us, as we say in the daily prayers, "He sustains the living with loving kindness," and in the Bircas HaMazone, "for He is the merciful G-d Who feeds and supports everyone."

Kinderlach . . .

Who are we? We have many things to do in our lives. We begin as children, and students. As we become older we marry and become parents, neighbors, workers, teachers, etc. These are all roles that we fulfill. What is important to us? What is the focus of our lives? Not the occupation, as with Paroh. Rather the spiritual work, as with Yehuda. That is the most important part of our day. That is what really interests us. That is what "makes us tick".

Gratitude

The famine was so bad in Egypt that people had run out of money to buy food. Yosef allowed them to pay for food with cattle and land. Paroh became the owner of the land. By the end of the second year, Yosef had purchased all of the land of Mitzraim for Paroh. Verse 47:22 states that the only land that he did not purchase was that of the priests of Egypt. Why? The Shlah HaKodesh explains, "A person has to avoid being ungrateful and repay good for good, even to a non-Jew. The priests of Egypt were good to Yosef, when they judged the charges brought against him by the wife of Potiphar. When they saw the truth, they saved him from the death penalty. Therefore, he was good to them."

Kinderlach . . .

Do you see how Yosef HaTzaddik repaid in kind the good that was done for him? What do we do when good things happen to us? Do we say, "Boruch Hashem"? "Hodu Lashem Ki Tov?" We should. We know that all good things come from Hashem. So, why not thank Him directly? The next time we get a good grade on a test, let's say, "Boruch Hashem!" When our Grandma and Grandpa come to visit us from far away, let's say "Hodu Lashem Ki Tov!" We're so happy that Hashem has been good to us!

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