

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת ויחי

ועיני ישראל כבדו מזקן לא יוכל לראות ויגש אתם אליו וישק להם ויחבק להם
“Now Yisrael’s eyes were heavy with age, he could not see; so he brought them near him and he kissed to them and hugged to them” (48:10)

Why does the posuk say that he hugged and kissed “to them” rather than say that he “hugged them.” The Or HaChaim answers that Yaakov was blind and because he could not see, he attempted to hug and kiss Ephraim and Menashe but they were not actually standing where he thought they were. Thus the posuk says that he hugged “to them.”

Rabbi Friedman suggests another explanation. This embrace was an expression of Yaakov’s love for what Ephraim and Menashe had become and what they had accomplished. He expressed his affection for their way of life and embraced them for their ability to remain committed to Yaakov’s way of life even while growing up in Egypt and to resist the influence of the people around them. He was hugging and kissing “to them,” to their intangible characteristics which meant so much to him.

ויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים: הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב ושמעו אל ישראל אביכם
“Then Yaakov called for his sons and said: Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in the End of Days. Gather yourselves and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisrael your father” (49:1-2)

Why did Yaakov tell his sons to gather twice and with two different expressions of gathering? The Kli Yakar explains that the two words which Yaakov used to mean “gather,” אסיפה and קיבוץ, are different. אסיפה refers to a gathering in a private place, whereas קיבוץ is when people come together from many different places, but it could be in private or in public. As we know from Chazal, Yaakov originally planned to reveal the time of Mashiach’s arrival to his sons and so he gathered them together as an אסיפה, in a private place, so that nobody should overhear him. But once Hashem

removed Yaakov's ability to share this information, a private gathering was no longer absolutely necessary, so he used the word קיבוץ to gather his sons.

The Daas Zekainim gives a second answer. Yaakov gathered his sons twice because he was alluding to the two exiles that their children would undergo and the two redemptions that would follow them.

The word יקרא is spelled in the posuk with an א, which would mean that Yaakov was telling them “that which He will call out to you.” Yaakov was teaching his children an important lesson. What will happen in the future is called out and dictated by Hashem based on our actions. Nothing happens by chance and nothing is coincidental. All of history has a divine author and everything happens to us by design.

וישב יוסף במצרים הוא ובית אביו ויחי יוסף מאה ועשר שנים
“Yosef dwelt in Egypt – he and his father’s household – and Yosef lived one hundred and ten years” (50:22)

Why does the Torah repeat that Yosef and his father’s house lived in Egypt? We know that this is where they had established their residence.

The Malbim explains that the Torah is telling us that Yosef’s life was peaceful and whole in all aspects. He lived in Egypt as its ruler peacefully, with eighty years of political stability. He and his brothers also lived together in harmony and there was peace between them. Finally, Yosef lived for 110 years in good health and his body was physically at peace.

Rabbi Friedman suggests another way of understanding this posuk. Yosef and his brothers and their families always knew that they were in Egypt and that they were not in their homeland. As long as a Jew in exile is aware of this fact, he is able to thrive and live a full life in a spiritual sense. This awareness is the key to not assimilating among the surrounding nations.

וישבע יוסף את בני ישראל לאמר פקד יפקד אלקים אתכם והעלתם את עצמתי מזה
“Then Yosef adjured the children of Yisrael saying: Hashem will indeed remember you and you must bring my bones up out of here” (50:25)

Why did Yosef say two separate statements in this posuk? He should have said: “When Hashem redeems you, please bring my bones to Eretz Yisrael.” Why did he separate the statement about the redemption? Rabbi

Friedman suggests that Yosef made everyone swear that the redemption would come. It was not enough to say that when the redemption would come, then they would take care of him. The redemption is a fact, not merely something that we hope for in the distant future. Yosef made everyone affirm their belief in the fact that Hashem will redeem them. One of the first questions that a person is asked during his divine judgment after he leaves this world is whether he anticipated the redemption. It is important for each individual to sincerely believe that Moshiach is going to come and can come at any moment, even today.

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