

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani zy"l, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



Vayigash תשפ"ו

• Zera Shimshon - the Limud that brings Yeshuos •

ליל 373

אמרות שמשון

Yosef Proved He Was Yosef Through His Likeness to Yaakov

"And Yosef said to his brothers: 'I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?'; and his brothers could not answer him, for they were startled before him." (Bereshit 45:3)

One might ask why he asked them again if his father was still alive, when he had already asked during their second arrival in Egypt, as it is written: "Is your elderly father of whom you spoke well? Is he still alive?" (43:27), and they had already answered him: "He is still alive." It is also necessary to analyse the meaning of the expression "for they were startled before him."

It can be explained according to what we find in the Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 84:5, cited by Rashi), that Yosef's countenance resembled that of Yaakov his father. Therefore, now that Yosef revealed himself to them and said: "I am Yosef," he added: "Is my father still alive?", meaning to say to them: "If you do not recognize me because I did not have a beard when I left and now I do, you can still recall the face of our father, who is still alive and has a beard, and you will see that my appearance is like his."

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Vayigash, end of Art. 3)

The Sign Yosef Showed

"And Yosef said to his brothers: 'Please come close to me'; and they approached. And he said: 'I am Yosef, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt'." (Bereshit 45:4)

Rashi comments that Yosef showed them that he was circumcised. This raises a difficulty: what kind of sign is that, if all the Egyptians were circumcised? For, as Rashi writes (42:55), from the first year of the famine, Yosef ordered them to be circumcised, and only on that condition did he provide them with food.

It can be answered that the Egyptians, when they circumcised themselves, did not fulfill the *mitzvah* of *periah* (פריעה: the uncovering of the glans following the circumcision of the foreskin), since the *mitzvah* of *periah* was only commanded to the People of Israel. Yosef, obviously, fulfilled the entire Torah and had the circumcision with *periah*, just as the Tosafot write (Yevamot 71b)

that Abraham Avinu also practiced circumcision with *periah*, and so he did to his son Yitzchak on the eighth day, and so Yitzchak did to his son Yaakov, and Yaakov, in turn, to his twelve sons.

Furthermore, it can be said that Yosef gave them this sign because, one way or another, it constituted conclusive proof that he was truly Yosef. For if they did not know that the Egyptians had been circumcised, they would undoubtedly recognize him as Yosef upon seeing him circumcised like them. And if they did know that the Egyptians were circumcised, they surely also knew the reason: that, since he was the one who

provided food to the entire population, he forced them to be circumcised to resemble him. From this, it necessarily follows that he was already circumcised beforehand. And if that were so, how could he be an Egyptian? He must perforce be Yosef, for if not, who would have forced him to be circumcised, he being the ruler over the entire land? It was he himself who established the decree of circumcision, and no one prior to him! In this way, it is an unmistakable sign that he was Yosef and not a mere Egyptian.

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Vayigash, Art. 4)

During the Famine Years, There Was No Issue in Being Supported by Others

"I will sustain you there, for there are still five years of famine remaining, lest you, your household, and all that you possess fall into poverty." (Bereshit 45:11)

One might ask: what good news is this that Yosef announces to his father, telling him that he will sustain and maintain him? Did our Sages not say in the Talmud (Beitzah 32b): "He who depends on the

table of his fellow, the world turns dark for him"?

It can be answered that this principle is not applicable here, for since these were years of famine, the world was dark for everyone. Moreover, it is a *mitzvah* to participate in the collective suffering, as our Sages said (Ta'anit 11a). This is the meaning of what Yosef said to him: "'I will sustain you there, for there are still five years of famine.' During those five years, the world is plunged into darkness for everyone, and therefore there is no issue with me maintaining you during that period."

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Vayigash, Art. 5)

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