

Keep It a Secret

PARSHA INSIGHTS - VAYIGASH (5760)

THE BIG FOUR

“Yosef said to his brothers, ‘Come close to me now,’ and they came close. And he said, ‘I am Yosef your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not worry, and do not be angry with yourselves that you sold me here; for it was to preserve life that Hashem sent me before you’ (45:4-5). *Rashi* quotes the *Midrash*, that Yosef proved his identity by showing them that he was circumcised. This explains the “*gisha*” [close approach] he requested of them.

The *Kli Yakar* probes deeply into Yosef’s words. What message was contained in the fact that he had a *bris mila* [covenant of circumcision]? Yosef had been living among the most promiscuous people, yet he remained pure and spiritually refined. *Bris mila* is an indication of morality, as we see in the words of the sages. It symbolizes the curtailing of animalistic desires. Recall Yosef’s incredible escape from the seduction of Potifar’s wife (*Parshas Vayaishev* 39). By displaying his *bris mila*, he was alluding to the fact that the decadence of Egypt had not affected him.

We are directed by the *Kli Yakar* to a *Midrash Shochar Tov* on *Tehillim* [Psalms] 114. *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel] were delivered from *Mitzraim* [Egypt] because of four merits.

1. They did not change their names to assimilate with the gentiles.
2. They did not alter their way of speaking. Much can be said about this second *zechus* [merit]; it has various meanings. It can denote that they continued speaking in the Holy Tongue, Hebrew. Or, they talked as Jews are supposed to talk, mentioning Hashem’s name all the time (“*im yirtzeh Hashem*” [if G-d Wills it], “*baruch Hashem*” [blessed is G-d], etc.), and not using curses or vulgarity.
3. The third merit noted in this *Midrash* by Rabbi Elazar Hakafar is that the Jews guarded themselves from revealing secrets (and *loshon hora* [evil gossip]).
4. Finally, they safeguarded themselves from immorality. Simply understood, this implies modest dress and behavior, unlike most citizens of Egypt at that time.

The *Kli Yakar* brilliantly proves that Yosef informed his father and brothers, BEFORE *Golus Mitzraim* [Egyptian exile] even began, that they would need these four merits to eventually be redeemed. Not only that, but he testified on himself that HE had been meticulous in all these areas to create a positive role model for all of *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel]. Let us examine each *zechus* and how it applied to Yosef.

1. In the verse cited at the beginning, Yosef declared, “*Ani Yosef..*” [I am Joseph]. Even though Paroh had changed Yosef’s name to Tzofnas Pa’anaiach (41:45), in the style of kings who award their noble servants with new titles, he ignored this. I am Yosef - this is my true name forever! This is the first merit, that the Jews kept their Hebrew names.
2. “Behold your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Binyamin, that I speak to you with MY OWN MOUTH” (45:12). *Rashi* from the *Midrash* remarks that this indicates Yosef communicated with the brothers in *Loshon Hakodesh* [the Holy language] - Hebrew. *Kli Yakar* clarifies: This was the second merit *Bnai Yisroel* needed to eventually leave *golus* [exile] - they didn’t change their language.



[Note: For some reason the *Kli Yakar* chose to explain merit 4 before concluding with merit 3.]

4. The sign of *bris mila*, as explained above, demonstrated Yosef’s adherence to the moral code of the Torah.
3. Yosef taught the brothers a powerful lesson about *shmiras haloshon* [avoiding evil gossip] and not breaching confidentiality. He summoned them to come close, as stated earlier. What did he say to those who had moved toward him? “I am your brother Yosef, whom you sold into Egypt.” Obviously, he excluded Binyamin from this dialogue, for Binyamin had nothing to do with the sale. ***Kli Yakar* asserts that for this reason he told the brothers to approach - so that Binyamin would not hear that they had sold him.**

In fact, Yosef never told his father that he had been sold! (Yaacov perceived it with divine intuition close to his death - see *Parshas Vayechi*.) What a marvelous demonstration of *shmiras haloshon*. If someone does not really need to know derogatory information, please do not tell him under any circumstances. One hundred reasons could have been suggested for Yosef being allowed to tell his father, but none of them would be viable “*heterim*” [genuine allowances].

As a postscript, *Kli Yakar* comments on the words Yosef said, “NOW do not worry” about the fact that you sold me... In the future, however, there will be people who WILL worry. Recall this year’s *d’var Torah* [lesson] on *Vayaishev*, that centuries later, ten righteous leaders of *Klal Yisroel* [the Jewish people]— the *Asara Harugai Malchus* [Ten Martyrs], were executed to make amends for the sale of Yosef. Those *tzadikim* [righteous people] will truly suffer for this deed, Yosef hinted, but it is not for you yourselves to undergo that suffering.

☞ Copies of the essay on *Vayaishev* are available by clicking the following link, or online at TorahMax.com under: “Sefer Bereishis”, “Parshas Vayeishev”, “[Patent Leather Perpetrators](#)”- R. Moshe Heigh.

Golus Mitzraim was the prototype for all our exiles. Let us study the merits we had to be saved from that hardship and attempt to gain these *zechuyos* [merits] to speedily depart from the present *golus*.

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