

Transient Parking Paved in Gold

PARSHA INSIGHTS - VAYIGASH (5758)

Setting up Magnificent Yeshiva Buildings - in Golus?

Some time ago, you might have received a publication from the Breuer's community in Washington Heights, New York, regarding the rededication of the splendid Rav Shimon Schwab building of their *yeshiva* [religious school]. On page two, Rabbi Reuven Feldman, the executive director, analyzes a major question that faces anyone wishing to build institutions in *golus* [exile]. "Why do we devote so many resources, both financially and emotionally, to building *yeshivos* [religious schools], if we are supposed to be ready to leave for *Eretz Yisroel* [the Land of Israel] at any moment? Is this the message we should be sending our children— that we are in *golus* and we are here to stay, planning on our future and our future generation being here? Don't we want to teach them that we, too, are ready to go any day to *Eretz Yisroel* when the *Geulah Shelaima* [complete and final redemption] arrives?" Earlier, Rabbi Feldman cites the well-known fact about the *Chofetz Chaim*. That *tzadik* [righteous man] lived in a sparsely furnished house, prepared to depart for *Eretz Yisroel* at any time, as soon as *Moshiach* [Messiah] would arrive. What should our attitude be regarding this matter?

Rabbi Feldman mentions our *parsha* [Torah portion] as a proof that *golus* IS a place to build Torah, and we are to do it enthusiastically. When *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel] first arrived in *Mitzraim* [Egypt] from Canaan (*Eretz Yisroel*), they were but seventy people (46:27). I would like to add that the *Netziv* on 46:7 proves that there were really more than seventy; the seventy listed and counted by name were just the most outstanding of Yaacov's offspring. But either way, they were a relatively small group, newly arrived in Egypt. Despite this fact, they set up lasting accommodations for *Talmud Torah* [study of Torah], taking into account the generations after them. We will soon see how this first *yeshiva* was founded in *Golus Mitzraim* [Egyptian exile]. Just think - all this was happening in *golus*, a place in which we are supposed to reside in a very impermanent way! True, they had a tradition that they would remain in Egypt for 210 years, as mentioned in the *Midrash Rabba* 91:2 on *Mikaitz* 42:2, also brought by *Rashi* on that *pasuk* [verse]. There, Yaacov *Avinu* [Jacob our forefather] informed his sons that their descendants would spend this amount of time in *golus*. Even so, our attitude about *golus* is supposed to be that it is only for awhile, and we constantly hope to return to *Eretz Yisroel* and Hashem's Presence. Despite all this, we discover that Torah institutions MUST be set up with all the energy and devotion it takes to do so.

As Rabbi Feldman puts it,

"The children of Yaacov went to Egypt, leaving *Eretz Yisroel* for the first of many times that the Jews would live in exile, AND IT IS THERE THAT WE ARE TAUGHT THE FIRST LESSONS OF DEALING WITH EXILE. The *pasuk* says, 'And Yaacov sent Yehuda to Yosef to prepare before him in Goshen' (46:28). *Rashi*, quoting the *Midrash (Rabba* 95:3), explains that the purpose of Yehuda's trip was 'to make ready a house of study from which learning (or: Teaching, *halachic* [legal] guidance and decisions) would emanate.' Yaacov set a pattern of how we are to live in exile. Just as he prepared for his private exile in Lavan's home by spending fourteen years of uninterrupted study in the *Yeshiva* of Shaim and Aiver (mentioned in the *Midrash Rabba* on *Vayaitzai* 68:11), so, too, he showed his family that it could not conceive of entering Egypt until one of them had prepared a place to learn Torah. Israel's spiritual sustenance requires Torah study, and it may not enter a hostile environment without making provisions for its spiritual survival. And that requires the building of *Yeshivos*."

Since this article is written so eloquently and relates so much to our *parsha*, I will continue to quote it.

"And so, yes, we build. We are in *Golus*, and we dare not forget that. We do yearn for the *Geulah Shelaima*... Yet until then, we have a mission, we have a goal. We must prepare our children and we must prepare them in the way our ancestors taught us. We must build vast Torah centers. We must build, and we must build with vigor, with vision, and with *Mesiras Nefesh* [utter devotion]. The task of the Jewish people in *Golus* is to survive *Golus* and be prepared for the *Geulah Shelaima*. That is why we give so generously to the building of Torah institutions, that is why we have Torah Centers worldwide, and per capita, the Jewish people are the most philanthropic people in the entire world. It is our mandate. It is our heritage, it is our survival."

Rabbi Feldman also points out the well-known reality that Daniel built up Bavel as a great Torah center. Thus, we have no choice but to adopt this positive attitude that *Talmud Torah* [transmitting Torah] MUST be developed to its fullest even in exile. THIS IS WHAT HELPS INSURE OUR VERY SURVIVAL NOW AND FOREVER!

The *Oznaim L'Torah* on 46:28, based on the *Gemara Yuma* 28B, gives us some valuable insight into this issue. The *yeshiva*, the *Bais Talmud*, being set up by Yaacov and his sons in *Mitzraim* was not a new idea in the family. From the days of all the *avos* [forefathers], the concept of *YESHIVA* was an intrinsic part of their lives. In *Yuma* 28B, all three *avos*, plus Eliezer (servant of Avraham), are said to have been “*zakain v'yoshaiv b'yeshiva*” [elders (or sages) sitting and learning Torah in a manner called *YESHIVA*]. The *Gemara* also proves that such was the case during *Golus Mitzraim* and our travels in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. In addition, Shaim Ben Noach, from whom Avraham descended, established the “first *yeshiva*” - that of Shaim and Aiver. It is no wonder that Yaacov *Avinu* refused to enter Egypt without setting up a *yeshiva* first.

One question remains, however, brought to our attention by Rav Sorotzkin. Why did Yaacov *Avinu* send YEHUDA ahead to set up the *yeshiva*? After all, two other sons seem more eligible. Levi Ben Yaacov is the progenitor of *Klal Yisroel's* [the Jewish people's] Torah teachers: “They (*Shaivet* [the tribe of] Levi) will teach Your ordinances to Yaacov, and Your Torah to Yisroel” (*V'zos Habracha* 33:10). Yissachar Ben Yaacov also seems likely to perform such a task: “From the sons of Yissachar, those with a profound understanding of the times so that they knew what Yisroel should do...” (*Divrai Hayamim Alef*, 12:33). Why did Yehuda receive this assignment?

We will view one solution provided by the *Oznaim L'Torah*, although he gives two. In fact, I am certain there are others as well. Yaacov already knew that *Shaivet* Yehuda would possess the traits of *malchus* [kingship] over *Bnai Yisroel*. Yaacov wished to teach his son, Yehuda, a significant lesson about leadership and government. A Jewish sovereign may NOT separate religion from government, as other ruling bodies do. Just the opposite is true. The supreme political leader of the Jewish people must **also** be the one to insure Torah education and adherence to all of G-d's precepts among his nation. He must be in the forefront, guiding *Klal Yisroel* to serve Hashem properly. “*L'horos*” [to teach] is his sacred responsibility - to guide us in all ways, particularly in Torah.

We must recall the importance of *yeshiva* wherever we find ourselves. May Hashem bring us back to Yerushalaim, the place we all really want to be as we learn His Torah.

By Rabbi Moshe Heigh

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