

Parshat Vayechi

The Golden Key to Redemption

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i. The Key to Redemption

Many years ago, in the far away land of *Goshen*, a promise was made. This pledge affected the lives of a whole nation for thousands of years. This nation walked the stage of history, wishing to live according to this destiny.

What is the promise? Who is the nation to which this pledge was made? How are they carrying it out?

When Yaakov our Forefather was elderly, he foresaw that the days of his years were at an end, so he "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, O sons of Yaakov, and listen to Israel your father"². What secret did Yaakov reveal to them? Seemingly, the Torah does not say, but *Rashi* explains according to the *Midrash*: "He wished to reveal the end³ to them, but the *Shechinah*⁴ departed from him, and he began to say other things".

Rashi's explanation is seemingly hard to accept, for a few questions must be asked:

1. Why did Yaakov wish to reveal the secret of the end of days? What benefit could there possibly be in knowing such information?
2. If there is an advantage in knowing this secret, why did *Hashem* hide it from Yaakov?

In order to answer these questions we must turn elsewhere, The Talmud says, in the last chapter of Sanhedrin⁵: "Rabbi *Alexandri* said: R. *Joshua ben Levi* pointed out a contradiction. It is written⁶: "I *Hashem* will hasten it (the redemption) in its time". We must ask: either the redemption will come in its time, or it will be hastened! How can the redemption speed up **in its time**?

R. *Yehoshua b. Levi* explains: "If the nation of Israel is worthy, I (*Hashem*) will hasten it (the redemption), and if they are not worthy; the redemption will come at the due time". Thus, there are two times for the redemption: (1) The due time that *Hashem* decided upon, which will come even if Israel are not worthy. (2) The due time for the redemption is also flexible; it can be hastened according to the behavior of Israel.

Therefore, Yaakov wanted to reveal both of these secrets: (1) the due time, (2) the secret of speeding up the redemption. The first secret was concealed from Yaakov, and he could not reveal it to his sons. But the second secret was revealed!

The Torah tells us exactly what this secret is. Let us examine the verses above once more; "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..."⁷.

The "golden key for redemption" is the assembly and gathering of the nation of Israel! In other words – **unity** is the key for redemption! The *Midrash* says: "The time that the nation of Israel unites together and becomes one assembly is the time of the final and complete redemption". Therefore, unity is the secret that Yaakov revealed to his sons, which hastens the redemption.

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² (*Bereshit* 49:1-2).

³ "The ultimate conclusion of all the exiles of the Jewish people" (*Gur Aryeh* 47:28).

⁴ Eminent Presence of *Hashem*.

⁵ (98a).

⁶ (*Yeshaya* 60:22).

⁷(*Bereshit* 49:1-2).

ii. Why are we Not United?

The destruction of the second Temple led to the two thousand years of exile from our land. What caused the destruction?

The *Netziv* of *Volozhin* explains that even though the generation of the second Temple was righteous and had great scholars, they lacked honesty in their way of life. Therefore, they had in their hearts hatred to their fellow Jews who did not share their exact views and opinions; they believed the others to be Sadducees and heretics. As a result of that behavior they ended up murdering each other, until the Temple was completely destroyed. Although in the process of the exile we managed to repair to some extent this disorder in the nation of Israel, but the hatred for different views, although mild, still dances between us. *Rav Kook zt"l* writes in his book "*Orot HaKodesh*": "If we were destroyed, and the world was ruined with us, because of hatred - we shall construct ourselves, and build the world with us, in love and kindness".

In order to understand how to unite with love and kindness we must be aware of the reasons for different views in the ways in worshipping *Hashem*:

Let us imagine a beam of bright light shining on a magnificent diamond. When the light hits the different facets of the diamond, it sends in every direction a blaze of colors. The reason for this is that every individual facet is cut in its own unique way and receives the beam of light in an exceptional manner. So is every individual in the nation of Israel who is a special facet in the diamond, and receives the beam of the light of the Torah in his own extraordinary way. Therefore, we must see all the different views as coming from one source. This knowledge enables us not only not to discard any opinion but also to see that all the views complete each other with harmony.

Now we must ask a difficult question: It is not difficult at all to dance around the Torah with friends who share more or less the same ideals and standards, but how does one unite and accept views which are destructive to Judaism?

iii. The Path of Unity

The great French philosopher *Walter* once said; "Although I completely disagree with your views, but I am prepared to fight until my last breath for your right to express those views".

Judaism says the same. The Talmud in tractate *Brachot*⁸ says: "*Abaye* used to say: "One should always worship *Hashem* in a wise way. [I.e., there are two ways of worshipping *Hashem*: 1) The narrow minded way which fights bitterly every other view. This way only brings darkness and hate. 2) Or there is an other way; the way of Light and love, which is chosen by the wise who worship *Hashem* completely with all the trimmings, but do it with understanding to those who for the moment did not discover the truth. The wise embrace the people - not the wrong views. This is the way of light and truth.] It is said⁹: "A soft answer turns away wrath" meaning that one should strive to bring peace with everyone in order that he will **beloved** in the eyes of *Hashem* and **respected** in the eyes of every one, and accepted with people".

Question: What is the difference between being "loved" and being "respected"?

Answer: If one stands up for his principles and beliefs, people do not like him, because he makes their life difficult, but they respect him for being idealistic in a loving way (as explained above). Therefore there is no reason to accept mistaken views in the name of pluralism. Rather, the *Rambam* says that we should embrace those people with understanding and show them the true light of the Torah.

Question: How do we bring back those who strayed off the path of the Torah?

Answer: The Talmud¹⁰ guides us: "*Abaye* once said: It is said in the Torah¹¹: "And you shall love *Hashem* your G-d with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might". This means that the name of Heaven shall be beloved because of your actions. If someone studies the Torah and attends on the disciples of the wise and is honest in business, and speaks pleasantly to everyone, what do people say concerning him? "Blessed are his father and teachers who taught him Torah, woe unto the people who have not studied the Torah. As a result of his learning look how fine his ways are, how righteous his deeds! On people like him the prophet *Yeshaya*¹² says: "And He said to me: "my servant Israel, in whom I will be glorified".

The Golden Key for Redemption is in our hands, will we use it?

I believe we will...

⁸ (17a).

⁹ (*Mishle* 15:1).

¹⁰ (Tractate of *Yoma* 86a).

¹¹ (*Devarim* 6:5).

¹² (49:3).