



At The SHABBAT TABLE

**PARSHAT
VAYIGASH**

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A Lesson in Economics

In this week's parsha, the Torah outlines Yosef's economic strategy during the years of famine. Yosef stored the surplus grain from the years of plenty; when the famine struck, the Egyptians initially bought food with their money. Once their money was depleted, they paid with their livestock. As the famine intensified, they surrendered their land. Eventually, with nothing left, they were forced to sell themselves, becoming servants to the Egyptian state in exchange for food.

This detailed account begs the question: why does the Torah devote so much attention to this progression? What lesson is being conveyed?

As with everything in the Torah, we are meant to derive more than just historical information but practical wisdom for the present day. Here is no exception, and a story of economics is actually a much deeper lesson in serving G-d. The Torah is teaching that when a person has nothing left to give, the only thing he can offer is himself. This is meant to shape how we relate to the Creator. Hashem showers us with endless kindness and blessing — far more than we could ever repay. Since repayment is impossible, the only meaningful response is to give ourselves over to Him, becoming a servant of Hashem; asking not what He can do for us, but what we can do for Him.

This idea sheds light on a familiar phrase in the *Amida*, where we describe Hashem as "*gomei chasadim tovim v'koneh hakol*" — the Bestower of goodness and the Acquirer of all. How does Hashem "acquire" everything? Through His constant generosity. Because He gives endlessly, we, in turn, belong to Him. We may have nothing material to offer in return, but we can offer our lives, our choices, and our devotion. In doing so, we repay kindness with commitment, and that is the greatest gift we can give. (Based on a d'var Torah shared by R' Yehoshua Zitron)

The Road to Hashem

After Yosef revealed himself to his brothers and sent them on their way back to bring their father, he instructed them, "al tirgezu baderech — Do not become agitated along the way" (Gen. 45:24).

R' Yechezkel of Kazmir explains that Yosef was not merely cautioning his brothers against arguing on the journey home. He was conveying something far deeper — a message to reverberate for generations.

When a person serves Hashem in his own sincere way and encounters another Jew walking a different path, there is no place for agitation or judgment. Do not become upset or scornful. There are many authentic roads that lead closer to Hashem. Your path is precious — and so is theirs. Yosef was teaching his brothers, and all of us, that the journey toward closeness with Hashem is not a single straight road. It is a winding path, filled with turns, curves, and different directions. Each soul travels its own route.

In a world that constantly pulls us toward division and criticism, Yosef reminds us that true unity emerges when we respect and honor one another's unique way of serving Hashem.

I thank my friend Danny Schwartz for sharing this idea with me.

An Embrace Across Time

"Then he fell upon his brother Binyamin's neck and wept, and Binyamin wept upon his neck" (Gen. 45:14). Rashi explains that Yosef wept over the two Batei Mikdash that were destined to stand in Binyamin's portion and would ultimately be destroyed, while Binyamin wept over the Mishkan of Shiloh, which was destined to be in Yosef's portion and would also be destroyed.

The Chatam Sofer raises a striking question. According to the Midrash, Yosef revealed himself to his brothers on Shabbat. But if so, how could Yosef and Binyamin be crying over the destruction of the Mikdash? After all, mourning for the Beit HaMikdash is forbidden on Shabbat, a day of joy.

The Chatam Sofer offers a remarkable insight. He explains that, contrary to the simple understanding, the brothers were not crying out of grief at all. Their tears were tears of joy. Through Divine Inspiration, they perceived a distant future — our generation — living thousands of years after the destruction, yet still vibrant, committed, and deeply connected to Torah and emuna. They foresaw a Jewish people that would endure exile, persecution, and unimaginable challenges, yet continue to spread Torah and faith across the world. That vision, miraculous and overwhelming, moved them to tears of profound joy.

As individuals and as a nation, we have faced countless hardships. Yet time and again, we emerge stronger, more resilient, and more devoted. Those tears remind us that even in the shadow of destruction, the story of the Jewish people is one of perseverance, faith, and enduring spiritual triumph.

"Unity doesn't mean being the same; it means valuing each other's differences." (Meaningful Minute)