**Parshas Vayigash – עוד יוסף חי**

**Learning Never Ends**

Yoseif left his brothers to return home, with an enormous burden. Yoseif proved to be right all along. How had they miscalculated? Without a doubt, they would all be preoccupied on the road, replaying every word and action that each said and did all those years ago. Each brother would be analyzing his role in Mechiras Yoseif. How would they explain all this to Yaakov? Was Yoseif biding his time to seek vengeance? What would the move to Mitzrayim mean for them?

With all this controversy, how did it enter Yoseif’s mind to warn them, אל תרגזו בדרך – don’t get “Areingetan”, engrossed in learning? The Gemara says that means, don’t delve into deeplearning, בעיון. Would they be in a proper frame of mind and in a situation that would lend itself to learning B’Iyun? Yoseif thought so. He knew his brothers. He knew that learning was the lifeblood of the B’nai Yaakov. Even in circumstances such as this, learning, even B’Iyun, remained paramount. Yoseif urged them to stay focused on making haste to get back to Yaakov without delay, and not get bogged down or distracted with intensive learning.

Yoseif also understood very well, that Yaakov Avinu would not readily accept the בשורה טובהof עוד יוסף חי. Indeed, the Pasuk describes Yaakov’s reaction – לא האמין להם. R’ Dovid Feinstein Shlit”a said, that Yaakov was skeptical about the news. Yes, he is alive. Yet, what can he expect from someone who was torn away from his family all these years, was thrust into the morass of טומאת מצריםand has risen to the heights of Egyptian nobility. “Dus Heist Gelebt?!” – You call that living? He may be Yoseif. But is he my son anymore, a product of Yaakov’s upbringing? Then Yaakov sees the עגלות, Yoseif’s message that he is still holding in the Sugya of עגלה ערופה that they left off with, before Yoseif’s abduction. Ah! רב עוד יוסף בני חי – This is Gevaldik! He is indeed Yoseif, my son who, despite all, he is still holding in learning.

The Rambam teaches that such a level of התמדהis meant for any person, in every situation or circumstance, not only GedolaiTalmideiChachomim and not just in a previous day and age. כל איש בישראל חייב בתלמוד תורה בין עני בין עשיר בין שלם בגופו בין בעל יסורים ביו בחור בין זקן...עד יום מותו שנאמר ופן יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייך. The Rambam ends his words by emphasizing the urgency of continual learning, so as not to allow a word of your learning to be forgotten!

Even on the battlefield, while facing the enemy, we learn in SeferYehoshua, Yehoshua bin Nun was confronted by the Malach Hashem, for not enforcing the Night Seder. All the men, even the combatants, should have been learning בהתמדה, during the lull in battle. This was no friendly admonition. It was a fiery condemnation issued by a towering Malach with his sword drawn, threateningly. Limud Torah was, then and always, a matter of the highest National priority.

I could remind you of the uninterrupted התמדהof the מתמיד הדור, R’ Moshe Feinstein zt”l. How, with the last Amein after Shachris, he was already immersed in learning MIshnayos, while winding up his Tefilin. How by Leining, right after carefully listening to the Bracha after someone’s Aliya, he continued studying Mishnayos till the next Aliyah. How, immediately after awakening from his nap, even while his eyes were still closed, he was reaching for the Tanach on the nightstand, so he could begin learning right after NegelVasser.

I could tell you of even R’ Moshe’s envy of the התמדהof the Heiligeh SkolyaRebbeזי"ע. As a young Bachur, he drove himself tirelessly to continue learning through the night in marathon learning sessions, by immersing his feet in buckets of ice water.

Instead, allow me to tell you of the מסירת נפשforLimud Torah of R’ Naftoli Yoseif Kramer z”l, who went to his rightful reward this week. Here was a Yid who grew up in 1930’s Boro Park, without the benefit of any kind of Yeshiva education. He was a meticulously honest employee and incredibly disciplined in his personal conduct. R’ Naftoli’s thirst for learning was remarkable, despite not having any formal background in learning. While they were still digging up the street to install the phone lines for the then-revolutionary Dial-a-Daf, he rushed to be one of the first subscribers. R’ Naftali raised a beautiful family and produced a generation of outstanding, Ehrlich children, while diligently finishing Shas over the phone three times. Taking early retirement, R’ Naftali made Aliyah to Eretz Yisroel to devote himself to his lifelong passion for learning Torah. Already in his sixties, R’ Naftali finally became the Yeshiva Bachur he always yearned to be. He learned two solid Sedorim a day, despite infirmities and all the upheaval of settling in to an entirely new environment. His uncompromising commitment to his learning, made him a familiar and respected icon of the Mir’s BeisHaMedrash. This isGevaldik! He is indeed Yoseif, who, despite all, was still holding in learning. יהי זכרו ברוך.

That’s what a Yid is. Whatever his circumstance, background, ability or philosophy – a Yid is someone who is meant to devote himself to the Eibishter’s Torah.

Have a wonderful Shabbos, yk

**L’RavchaD’Milsa Weekly Almanac**

**Sunday, Parshas Vayichi-8 Teves**

Completion of The Septuagint under Ptolemy II, the translation of the Torah into Greek by seventy Chachomim, each working independently of the other. Every word and every change was identically reproduced by each Chochom! The ChachmeiHaDor saw the detriment that would come out from making the Torah open for all to feel that they understand without the benefit of Torah ShebalPeh. They decreed three days of fasting. One of the reasons we fast AsarahB’Teves.

**Monday, Parshas Vayichi-9 Teves**

*Dec. 21, Winter Solstice – 11:48 P.M. EST. Shortest daytime hours of the year.*

**Ezra Hasofer** (313 BCE or 320 BCE) and **Nechemya**

According to some sources, the birth of Yeshu.

Court-martial of **Captain Alfred Dreyfus** as a result of the hateful Dreyfus Affair. (1894)

**Tuesday, Parshas Vayichi -10 Teves**

**TaanisAsarahB’Teves**

Start of the siege of Yerushalayim, first step towards the Churban.

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