

Parshas Vayigash – Yeshaya Nosson Hepner

ז' טבת תשע"ו – 19th December 2015 – שבת פ' ויגש

After Yosef had revealed his true identity to his brothers; the brothers prepared to return home with a view to then accompanying their father Ya'akov back down to Mitzrayim. The Possuk records that Yosef gave to each of his brothers (barring Binyomin) a new set of clothing; and he gave Binyomin five new sets of clothing, as well as three hundred silver pieces. To Ya'akov, the Possuk tells us that Yosef sent "ten donkeys bearing of the best of Egypt" (45:22-23).

Rashi offers two definitions of what this was:

- 1) Vintage wine (Gemara Megillah 17b)
- 2) Split beans (Bereishis Rabbah 94:2)

Vintage wine

The Gemara elaborates that vintage wine was sent to Ya'akov because "the minds of the elderly are calmed by it". Maharsho explains that wine has a warming effect; important for the elderly who may suffer from the cold.

R' Chaim Kanievsky shlita, in his sefer Ta'ama D'Kra calculates (in a mathematical/Talmudic analysis beyond the scope of this Dvar Torah sheet!) that the total value of that which Yosef gave his brothers precisely matched the value of the wine he sent to Ya'akov, namely 3600 Selah.

Split beans

The Maharzav explains that split beans give pleasure when eaten. In a similar vein, the Matnos Kehunah writes that split beans have the quality of removing worry; and are also used medicinally to combat insomnia. The Radal explains that split beans are easy to chew and swallow, making them particularly suited to the elderly who may have trouble eating other foods.

The Gur Aryeh expounds: Ya'akov was aware that his descent to Mitzrayim would mark the start of a long and bitter exile for the Jewish nation. As such, he was frightened to make the journey. Yosef wished to reassure his father that whilst the nation would indeed suffer in Mitzrayim, they would also greatly increase in number. Furthermore, their miraculous population growth would be in direct proportion to their suffering (see Sh'mos 1:12). This was symbolised by the split beans: When ground in a pestle and mortar, the beans disintegrate into many small particles. The harder they are ground, the greater the number of particles! So too, the Jewish nation would grow in proportion to how hard they are "ground" (i.e. how much they suffer through the exile).

If I may add, here's a small thought of my own based on the Gur Aryeh. Hashem sends us Nisyonos – challenges to enable us to grow spiritually. On occasion, these Nisyonos may seem insurmountable. We can then take great encouragement from the aforementioned concept: If Hashem is "pushing us hard", then surely the spiritual growth we stand to attain by passing the Nisayon will be tremendous... and well worth the effort!