



Vayeshev: The Struggle for Peace and Tranquility

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Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan (Genesis 37:1).

Yaakov had one simple desire, "*Bikeysh Yaakov ley'sehv b'shaalva, Yaakov wanted to dwell in peace and tranquility (Rashi 37:2).*" After running from Esav, contending with Lavan and suffering tragedy in Shechem, all Yaakov wanted was to settle in the land of his fathers, serve God and watch his family grow. "*God says to the righteous, is it not enough that you will have peace in the World to Come, you also want peace in this world as well (Rashi 37:2)?*" We then go on to read of the disturbing dynamic between Yosef and his brothers. Jealousy and animosity ultimately turn the brothers against Yosef and Yaakov is plunged into two decades of mourning for the son he thought had been killed. Was it too much for Yaakov to ask for peace in this world and the next? Why does it have to be an either or? What was wrong with Yaakov's desire for tranquility and quiet after what had been a tumultuous couple of decades?

Perhaps, to gain insight into Rashi's comment we must look at an episode toward the end of the Parsha. Yosef found himself incarcerated together with the Pharaoh's baker and butler. One morning the men awoke disturbed by dreams they had the night before. Yosef offered to listen and attempt to interpret their dreams.

So the chief cupbearer related his dream to Joseph, and he said to him, "In my dream, behold, a vine is before me. And on the vine are three tendrils and it seemed to be blossoming, and its buds came out; [then] its clusters ripened into grapes. And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I placed the cup on Pharaoh's palm (Genesis 40:9-11)."

Yosef explained that in three days, the butler would be restored to his former position dutifully serving Pharaoh.

Now the chief baker saw that he had interpreted well. So he said to Joseph, "Me too! In my dream, behold, there were three wicker baskets on my head. And in the topmost basket were all kinds of Pharaoh's food, the work of a baker, and the birds were eating them from the basket atop my head (Genesis 40:9-11)."

Yosef explained that in three days the baker would be executed and the birds would pick away at his flesh.

What did Yosef see in these dreams that led him to offer these differing interpretations? Rav Elchanan Wasserman (1874-1941) explains that Yosef saw a fundamental difference in the two dreams. The butler's dream was filled with dynamic activity, the baker's was not. The butler saw himself serving and doing, the baker saw himself passive and at rest. Where there is movement, there is life. Where there is passivity there is death.

Perhaps, this insight sheds light on Yaakov's request. What is the meaning of "*Bikeysh Yaakov ley'sehv b'shaalva, Yaakov wanted to dwell in peace and tranquility?*" Yaakov felt he had done what was asked of him. Unlike his father and grandfather, all of his offspring would perpetuate the code of Abrahamic values. He had established a spiritually complete family. Yaakov wanted to rest, his beloved Rachel was gone, and he had his share of struggles and life battles – now it was time for peace. But God says, this world is not for resting, this world is not for tranquility. Life is only meaningful if it is filled with perpetual growth and it is the struggle which serves as the catalyst for this growth. It is our challenges that force us to be more and do more. It is the hurdles of life that allow us to find our inner strength and resolve. It is only through challenge and struggle that we fully self-actualize. After 120, when we reach *Olam HaBa*, the World to Come; there we will experience true peace, tranquility and rest from our struggles.

We look forward to the weekend, we plan our vacations and we aspire to retire. But in reality, our job is to work, our mission is to struggle, our mandate is to grow. We must always look for ways to expand our soul and become more. We must learn to embrace the hard work of life and relish the opportunities to shape our circumstances. Although we may yearn for tranquility, deep down we know that true fulfillment and happiness can only be found through perpetual growth and embracing the challenges the challenges of life.